

Saints claim MVC division title

Written by Tom Fruehling

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The Xavier Saints cinched back-to-back Mississippi Valley Conference division softball championships under second-year coach Nikki Price Monday night, but it didn't come easy against the upstart Washington Warriors.

"They definitely put us in some pressure situations," said Price. "They're going to be a headache for other teams in the years to come."

For this night, however, experience trumped youth as the Saints swept the doubleheader at home, 5-3 and 9-4.

And on Senior Night it was fitting that the three Xavier players being honored had a hand in every one of their team's rallies.

"We count on them," Price pointed out. "They were a big part of our first-ever championship last year. And, obviously, they're a big part this year again."

After Washington jumped on top in the fourth inning in the opener on a two-run homer by eighth grader Erica Oler, Xavier came right back to tie on four straight hits from its veteran-stacked top of the lineup.

Seniors Courtney Colston and Allison Schwach singled, junior Erin Drahozal knocked one in with a hit to left and senior Hayley Deutmeyer followed with another RBI single.

"We try to provide some leadership by getting things started," said center fielder Colston, the leadoff batter.

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“And put some pressure on,” added second baseman Schwach. “We just want to make contact and make something happen.”

As a result, according to shortstop Deutmeyer, “If we make contact, good thing usually happen.”

The trio came through again in the go-ahead fifth when Colston walked and Schwach singled to load the bases. With slugger Drahozal at the plate, a wild sequence followed with one runner scoring on a wild pitch, another on a throwing error and a third runner tagged out.

Drahozal then homered deep to left, a potential four-bagger reduced to a solo shot. She also homered in the nightcap, her 11th of the season to go along with a .491 batting average.

After the three-run surge, Deutmeyer again singled but was stranded.

In the second game, Jamie Feltes got things started for Xavier with a long two-run homer in the second inning and Colston added an RBI single to put the Saints up 3-0.

Warrior senior Bria Lenten got her team on the board with a solo home run in the fifth (her second of the night as well), and Washington made a game of it at 4-4 in the sixth with three runs on just a pair of hits.

The comeback was short-lived, though, as the Saints stormed back with five runs in the bottom of the inning.

“We fought the whole way,” said Washington Coach Erin Jones. “Not once did we ever feel we were defeated. We sprinted out there with some swag and a lot of confidence.”

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“I tell the girls that if we play hard and have fun, good things will happen. And this year, we’ve passed all expectations.”

Xavier is 31-6 overall and 21-3 in the conference. Washington is 21-16 and 13-13.