

Saints sweep No. 10 Lions in softball

Written by Jim Ecker

Tuesday, 23 June 2015 21:50 - Last Updated Wednesday, 24 June 2015 20:08



Erin Drahozal has been playing softball for Xavier with a tender heart this season.

Her mother, Kelly, is undergoing treatments for breast cancer, and Erin appreciates all the support she and her family have received from teammates and opponents alike.

"We held a fundraiser today and when we went to Jefferson a couple of weeks ago they had a fundraising thing," Drahozal said after the Saints swept Linn-Mar at Bob Erusha Field Tuesday night. "And we have pink headbands supporting her."

Drahozal performed well as a pitcher and hitter as Xavier won both games by 8-1 scores, but she's not able to focus entirely on softball even when she's between the lines.

"It's kind of hard, because my mom is like my best friend," she said. "It's always in the back of my mind. It's always there."

Drahozal pitched a complete game in the opener, giving her a 5-5 record and 1.95 ERA. She went 1-for-5 in the twinbill, but walked three times and was a threat in the middle of the lineup.

Freshman Maria Steffen (2-2) tossed another complete game in the nightcap as Xavier swept

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the 10th-ranked team in Class 5A.

Morgan Breitbach stole the show on offense for the Saints by going 6-for-8 with a grand slam and eight RBIs. She went 3-for-4 in both games and hit the ball hard all night.

The grand slam came against Linn-Mar star Maddie Ryan in the first game. It was her first home run of the season.

"The coaches keep preaching to look for your pitch and patience at the plate," said Breitbach. "She (Ryan) just gave me a pitch I could handle and I did what I could with it."

The Saints raised their records to 11-9 overall and 9-7 in the Mississippi Valley Conference. Linn-Mar fell to 13-10 overall and 9-5 in the league.



"We're looking to get in a groove right now," said Breitbach, a senior who will attend DePaul University. "It was a good team win all-around. Everyone was hitting the ball and we were making defensive plays and our pitchers did a great job."

Breitbach does not plan to play softball at DePaul. "I'm going to hang up the cleats, I guess," she said.

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Drahozal, on the other hand, will play ball at Upper Iowa University and is looking forward to getting there. First she hopes the Saints can make a deep run in the postseason tournament in July.

The Saints have been a little choppy this season, but they looked good Tuesday.

"We just need a couple of games to get back into it," said Drahozal. "We're a good team. We just haven't played so well at times. I think tonight was a good statement. You want to be hot at the end."

Xavier Coach Nikki Gahring liked the way her team played.

"When the girls come with the right mindset they can be very, very tough and very competitive," she said. "It's just consistently getting them with that mindset and attacking anybody we play."

Gahring, who is expecting her first child in a few weeks, coached from well beyond the third-base coaching box for all of the first game and half of the second game before yielding to assistant coach Kristen Winter.

Gahring's due date coincides with the first round of the Class 4A regional tournament July 9 and she plans to step aside and let Winter run the club at that point.

Hannah Helms socked a home run, went 2-for-4 and scored three runs for Xavier in the first game. Charlotte Richards was 2-for-3 and Kailee Becker was 2-for-4. Elly Schuemann and Elison Ollinger had two hits for Linn-Mar.

Richards was 2-for-3 with two RBIs for Xavier in the nightcap. Ally Johnson and Ryan had two hits for Linn-Mar.

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GAME 1

Linn-Mar ▯ ▯ 000 100 0 - 1 8 2

Xavier ▯ ▯ ▯ 100 205 x - 8 10 2

W - Drahozal. L - Ryan.

GAME 2

Linn-Mar ▯ ▯ 100 000 0 - 1 9 4

Xavier ▯ ▯ ▯ 330 200 x - 8 10 0

W - Steffen. L - Braughton.