

Cassie Himmelsbach has been a capable hitter for the Xavier Saints during her career, but she had some pretty ugly stats this season heading into Thursday night's doubleheader against Dubuque Hempstead.

"They were really rough," she acknowledged.

That changed Thursday when the nomadic Saints were finally able to play some true home games at Bob Erusha Field, which has been plagued by drainage issues this year.

Himmelsbach swatted a pair of solo home runs in the first game as the Saints trimmed Hempstead, 3-2. The visitors captured the nightcap, 10-7.

Himmelsbach, a senior third baseman, was hitting .176 with no homers and no RBIs through Xavier's first seven games of the campaign.

"I had a lot of bad at-bats," she said. "I just couldn't hit anything. It was awful."

Pitch selection was the culprit. She'd been swinging at too many bad pitches and that had to end.

"I really took that to heart, because I really have been chasing a lot of pitches lately and that's why my stats were not good," she said. "Tonight I took my pitch and I just drove it."

Himmelsbach hit a solo home run in the second inning of the first game and belted another solo shot in the fifth. She also walked.

Xavier snapped a 2-2 tie in the bottom of the sixth inning when Charlotte Richards led off with a bunt single and scored the go-ahead run on a squeeze bunt by Katie Langholz.

Maria Steffen pitched a three-hitter for the Saints in the first game with two strikeouts.

Himmelsbach did not get any hits in the second game, but she drew three more walks. She hopes her productive night – two homers and four walks – will get her going for the rest of the season.

"I'm hoping so," she said. "It feels like it."

Xavier Coach Nikki Gahring was happy to see Himmelsbach break loose.

"When she has good discipline at the plate, she can do a lot of good things," said Gahring. "When she's disciplined, we're going to get good, quality at-bats from her."

Charli Patten had two hits with a two-run double and three RBIs for Xavier in the second game. Hannah Helms, Langholz and Olivia Richards also had two hits.

Xavier, which is ranked No. 15 in Class 4A, raised its records to 5-4 overall and 5-3 in the Mississippi Valley Conference. Hempstead, which is ranked No. 14 in Class 5A, raised its marks to 7-2 overall and 6-1 in the league.

Xavier has played "home" games at Jefferson and Solon because of the drainage problems at Erusha Field and has practiced at Jefferson and Coe. Gahring said the other schools have displayed "awesome generosity" to help the Saints this year.

Gahring said there's been a "mental strain" of constantly packing their bags and heading somewhere else to practice and play.

"It's great to be back home and hopefully here to stay," she said.