Written by Jim Ecker
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It was supposed to be a showdown for bragging rights in junior college softball, but top-ranked DMACC was too good for the second-ranked Kirkwood Eagles Wednesday afternoon.

The Bears swept the Eagles, 6-0 and 9-7, to grab a two-game lead in the ICCAC conference standings and solidify their hold on the No. 1 ranking in the NJCAA Division II poll.

"They're good," said Kirkwood Coach Joe Yegge in admiration. "They're the best team in the nation."

DMACC raised its impeccable records to 26-0 overall and 8-0 in the conference. Kirkwood fell to 29-5 overall and 6-2 in the league.

Molly Jacobsen, a junior college All-American for the Bears in 2017, tossed a two-hitter against Kirkwood in the opener and retired the last 15 batters in a row. She changed speeds all game with a sizzling fastball and mesmerizing change-up.

Jacobsen began the day with a microscopic 0.10 earned run average, having allowed just one earned run in 67 innings with 142 strikeouts.  Once the first game was over, her ERA was even lower at 0.09 with 149 K's in 74 innings.

Kirkwood began the day with a .391 team batting average and was averaging 9.4 runs per game, but Jacobsen (12-0) tamed the Eagles and handed them their first shutout of the year.

"She proved today that she's the best in the nation," said Yegge. "She's it. She's good. She's got all the tools.

"She has great composure, great stuff and great control."

Yegge said Jacobsen is being flooded with offers from some of the top NCAA Division I programs in the country.

The Bears also proved they can hit the ball. They collected six runs on 11 hits against Kirkwood ace DoniRae Mayhew, who suffered her first loss of the season and fell to 14-1.

DMACC owned a 9-2 lead in the second game and chased KCC starter Natalie Halvorson, but Kirkwood scored five times in the bottom of the sixth inning to pull within 9-7 and make it interesting.

Jacobsen relieved in the sixth after the Eagles had scored twice to make it 9-4 with two outs. The home team finally got to Jacobsen for three hits, including a two-run single by Lauren Kuch, but Jacobsen got a strikeout to end the threat.

Mayhew hit her 13th home run in the first inning of the nightcap.

DMACC and Kirkwood probably will finish first and second in the ICCAC conference this year, but they'd be assigned to different regional tournaments and both teams could make the World Series again just as they did last season.

That takes some of the pressure off both teams. It also makes for friendlier competition between Yegge and DMACC Coach Bob Ligouri.

"Absolutely," said Yegge. "This has gone from a heated rival to a respected rival. Bob and I actually talk a lot about our conference and how to make things better.

"It's funny, because people think we have a heated relationship with each other. Bob and I probably talk three or four times a week. We respect each other's program."

Kirkwood and DMACC are scheduled to meet in another twinbill on Wednesday, April 25 in Boone.