

Kaste, Bevans deliver for No. 5 Eagles

Written by Jim Ecker
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Miranda Kaste and Monica Bevans are not planning to play college softball after they finish their careers at Kirkwood this season, but they've both left the door ajar.

After what they did Saturday, it might be tough for either Eagle to put their bats and gloves away for good.

Kaste belted two clutch home runs and Bevans snapped a 5-5 tie with a two-run double as the fifth-ranked Eagles escaped Iowa Central, 8-5, in the second round of the



regional tournament at Kirkwood.

Kaste, who is not known as a power hitter, slammed a long homer to right field to tie the game, 1-1, in the fifth inning and get all those goose-eggs off the scoreboard.

She came up again in the sixth inning and belted a long two-run homer to center field to tie the game again, 5-5, and set the stage for Bevans' heroics a little later in the inning.

Kirkwood (45-11) will face Iowa Central (32-27) again Sunday at high noon in the championship round of the double-elimination tournament.

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Kaste, an infielder and relief pitcher, had socked only two homers all season before connecting for the biggest round-trippers of her life.

"I'm 5-foot-3," she noted, smiling. "I'm not expected to hit a lot of homers. Perfect timing."

Kaste, a sophomore from Muscatine, plans to attend North Dakota State next year and not play softball. "I'm not going on to play as of now, so this could be my last ride," she said.

That could change. Maybe. "It's in the back of my mind," she allowed.

Bevans, a sophomore from Solon, strode to the plate in the sixth inning with the game tied, 5-5, and the bases loaded. She laced a double to left-center to make it 7-5 and give the Eagles a little breathing room.

"I was zoning one pitch, a pitch I know I can hit," said Bevans, who likes fastballs on the outer part of the plate. "I needed to do it for the team. We've worked so hard this season."

Bevans, a catcher and first baseman this season, has been accepted into the education program at the University of Northern Iowa and does not plan to play for the Panthers despite hitting .484 with 14 homers and 67 RBIs for Kirkwood.

"As of right now I'm not, but who knows? Things can change," she said, not closing the door.

She might not be able to play at UNI, which is an NCAA Division I school, but maybe there's another college out there for her.

"I guess if I visit, they have a good education program and I love the coach and the campus," she said.

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If not, her softball career could be coming to an end. "This could be it, potentially," she said. "It's a little sad. I'd miss it so much."

If Kirkwood wins the regional title, the Eagles will host a district tournament next Thursday and possibly Friday. The district champ advances to the junior college World Series.

Bevans, who ranks fifth in the country in RBIs, is playing with two bad thumbs and gutting it out. She'd like to endure the pain all the way to the World Series.

"My right one is broken," she said, displaying the crooked digit. "The left one, I tore the ligament. Yep. It doesn't feel great, but it's worth it."

Bevans wears a protective brace on her left thumb to soften the blows, especially when she's catching fastballs from DoniRae Mayhew and Natalie Halvorson. Mayhew (18-3) got the win Saturday and Halvorson pitched a scoreless final inning for a save.