

## Saints earn date with No. 1 Clippers

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Xavier Saints respect the Clear Creek Amana softball program and its rich tradition, but they don't fear the top-ranked Clippers.

The Saints say they're looking forward to the challenge of battling Clear Creek Amana Tuesday in the Class 4A regional finals, with a berth in the state tournament hanging in the balance.

Clear Creek Amana won the Class 3A state title last year and landed in 4A this year when the IGHS AU added another class.

"I feel good," Xavier shortstop Hayley Deutmeyer said Saturday night. "I feel like we're just going to go in and do what we know how to do and come out with a 'W'."

The Saints earned a date in the regional finals by clubbing Dubuque Wahlert, 14-3, Saturday in the semifinals at Bob Erusha Field.

Xavier has a modest 24-17 record and Clear Creek Amana is sitting at 40-1, but the Saints have played a steady diet of Class 5A schools this year and think the competition they've faced in the Mississippi Valley Conference will help them against the Clippers.

"Having the tougher schedule and facing much tougher pitching in Class 5A helps," said right fielder Sydney Galligan. "Hopefully we'll be ready to go out and score some runs. Obviously

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they're going to score runs, too.

"We just have to make sure we're on top of our game and ready to go. They have a really good program and really good history, but hopefully we can pull that one out, too."

Xavier scored plenty of runs against Wahlert. The Saints swept a twinbill from the Golden Eagles on May 31, 6-2 and 6-0, but they brought their hitting shoes to the ballpark Saturday and crossed the plate 14 times in seven innings.

"They were just throwing the ball where we could hit it. And we were hitting the ball well," said Deutmeyer, who belted a long home run to left field to start Xavier's scoring in the second inning.

Dubuque Wahlert (16-25) led 2-0 and 3-1 in the early innings, but Xavier scored five runs in the third inning and three more runs in the fourth to take command at 9-3. They tacked on two runs in the fifth, another run in the sixth and two more in the top of the seventh as part of a 16-hit attack.

Nikki Price, Xavier's interim head coach, called it a total team effort. She said the Saints are a better ballclub now than when they faced Wahlert in late May.

"A little more focused," said Price, who is running the club while Brian Erbe continues to recuperate from heart surgery. "It's later in the season, we're playing well now.

"Earlier in the season we had some little mixups, but we're playing well at the right time and we're focused and ready to go."

Every member of the starting lineup made a contribution to the 14-run outburst.

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Galligan went 3-for-4 and scored twice. Erin Drahozal and Allison Schwach both went 3-for-5, while Deutmeyer and Erica Miller were both 2-for-4 with three RBIs. Drahozal and Jenna Schulte drove in two runs apiece. Schulte and Deutmeyer scored three times.

Jacey Wiebold pitched the first four innings to get the victory and Drahozal pitched the last three frames.

Price is confident the Saints will be ready to play Clear Creek Amana on Tuesday.

"It's an exciting opportunity and a challenge," she said. "We're going to play the No. 1-ranked team, but we're going to give them everything we've got. We're going to play good defense, hit the ball, pitch well and we'll see how it goes.

"They have nothing to lose," said Price of her players. "There's no pressure on them. They're playing well and we've worked hard every day. Yeah, we'll be ready to go."

### XAVIER (14)

Schwach, 2b, 5 1 3 0, Galligan, rf, 4 2 3 1, Feltes, 3b, 4 0 1 0, Schulte, 1b, 3 3 1 2, Drahozal, dp/p, 5 2 3 2, Richards, pr, 0 1 0 0, Deutmeyer, ss, 4 3 2 3, Ireland, lf, 2 1 0 1, Breitbach, ph, 1 0 0 0, Miller, c, 4 0 2 3, Bastian, cr, 0 0 0 0, Colston, cf, 5 1 1 0, Wiebold, p, 0 0 0 0. Totals 37 14 16 12.

### WAHLERT (3)

McAllister, cf, 3 1 2 0, Schmitt, 2b, 3 2 2 0, Nilles, ss, 4 0 4 1, Tath, p, 3 0 0 0, Rogers, p, 1 0 0 0, Link, lf, 3 0 0 1, Koppes, 1b, 3 0 1 0, Bahl, c, 3 0 0 0, Nauman, 3b, 3 0 0 0, Callahan, rf, 3 0 0 0. Totals 29 3 9 2.

Xavier 015 321 2 - 14 16 1

Wahlert 201 000 0 - 3 9 3

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Wiebold, Drahozal (5) and Miller; Tath, Rogers (4), Tath (6) and Bahl. W - Wiebold (11-9). L - Tath (10-11). 2B - Schulte, Drahozal, Miller, Schmitt, Koppes. HR - Deutmeyer. SB - Feltes, Richards, Deutmeyer, Ireland.