

No.6 J-Hawks make regional finals

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 12 July 2014 20:43 - Last Updated Saturday, 12 July 2014 21:43



Jefferson Coach Brian Erbe liked his pitching and defense Saturday night, but he was concerned about his team's lackluster approach on offense.

The combination was good enough to defeat Dubuque Hempstead, 6-1, in the semifinals of the Class 5A regional softball tournament, but Erbe hopes the J-Hawks come out swinging Tuesday night in the regional finals.

The sixth-ranked J-Hawks (33-6) will host Dubuque Senior (19-22) in the regional finals Tuesday at 7 p.m. at Larry Niemeyer Field with a trip to the state tournament on the line.

Dubuque Senior upset No.9 Linn-Mar, 2-0, in the regional semifinals Saturday at Linn-Mar.

Jefferson collected only six hits against a trio of soft-tossers from Dubuque Hempstead and left six runners on base in the first two innings when they could have busted it open.

"Defensively we played very well, I thought," said Erbe. "Offensively we left way too many people in scoring position. We won't be able to do that Tuesday against Senior," he said.

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Dubuque Senior features a top pitcher in A.J. Medinger, who blanked the J-Hawks 5-0 last year and 2-0 this year. The Rams have a losing overall record, but the equation changes when Medinger has the ball.

"When we get opportunities against A.J. Medinger, we have to take advantage of them," said Erbe. "So we'll work on that for the next couple of days."

Alyssa Olson pitched a three-hitter with six strikeouts for Jefferson Saturday night, even though she was not in top form.

"Oly was a little rusty tonight," said Erbe. "She hasn't pitched for a little bit. She's been kind of nursing a sore arm.

"She's fine now," he said. "This was great for her. Hopefully she'll be able to bounce back and be a little bit more like herself on Tuesday."

Jefferson scored five runs in the first two innings to take control early, but the J-Hawks had a golden opportunity to score a lot more and blow the Mustangs away. Instead, Jefferson sat on those five runs and gave Hempstead a chance to make it 5-1 in the sixth inning.

The J-Hawks scored in the bottom of the sixth to finish the offense for the night. Erbe thought his players let too many good pitches go by.

"I don't think they were aggressive enough at all," he said. "We needed to get after the first pitch. There's no reason to take a first-pitch strike, as fas I'm concerned with that type of pitching. It's certainly not overpowering."

The three Hempstead pitchers walked nine batters and hit two others and the Mustangs (20-21) committed four errors, but the J-Hawks were not able to fully capitalize.

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Tori Brandon had a two-run single for Jefferson in the first inning. Maddie Hansen went 2-for-3.

Emily Walton made a terrific diving catch in right field for the J-Hawks and Jefferson did not make any errors in the game.

Hempstead 000 001 0 - 1 3 4

Jefferson 320 001 x - 6 6 0

W - Olson (16-5). L - Hartakker.