

Drahozal helps Saints sweep J-Hawks

Written by Tom Fruehling

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In a doubleheader duel between ace pitchers, Xavier's tough-as-nails Erin Drahozal came out on top twice Tuesday night on the Saints' home diamond.

Drahozal picked up a pair of wins while Jefferson's Alyssa Olson lost her first two of the year as Xavier came from behind to sweep the Class 5A third-ranked and previously unbeaten J-Hawks.

The Saints took the opener, 2-1, with both runs coming in the sixth inning.

And after spotting Jefferson a 4-0 lead in the nightcap, the Class 4A sixth-ranked Saints rallied back to win, 6-5, in eight innings.

Jefferson Coach Brian Erbe calls rise-ball specialist Olson "the best pitcher in the state."

And she may well be. Before Tuesday, she was 5-0 with an ERA of 0.58 and 58 strikeouts in 36 innings pitched. Batters were hitting just .105 against her.

On this night, though, fellow junior Drahozal was a bit better.

"When I step on the mound, I always think I'm the best," she said after allowing four hits in the first-game victory. "Sometimes I'm not. But tonight I was really hitting my spots way better than I have been so far this year."

The only run she gave up to the hard-hitting J-Hawks (10-2) was in the fourth when freshman

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Kennedy "Big Cat" Dighton laced an RBI single up the middle.

The Saints, meanwhile, could muster little against Olson, who recorded six strikeouts and gave up just a bloop single through five innings. Two costly errors in the sixth, however, allowed Xavier to bounce back.

Courtney Colston opened the inning with an infield hit and Drahozal helped her own cause by drilling a single to left. Morgan Breitbach walked to load the bases.

The Saints tied the game when Jefferson left fielder Hannah Towns dropped a fly and then went ahead when second baseman Avery Guy flubbed a grounder.

If fundamentals cost Jefferson in the first game, it was fundamentals that won it for Xavier in the second.

The J-Hawks jumped out in front on a pair of booming two-run homers over the left-field fence by Maddie Hansen and Guy in the first and second innings.

In the first inning, Jefferson hit for the cycle with a single by Dighton, double by Erin Kuba, triple by Katelyn Holub and Hansen's homer.

The barrage chased starter Kylie Oldridge, and strong-armed Drahozal returned to pitch the rest of the way.

The Saints went ahead 5-4 in the fourth by smacking J-Hawk second-game starter Alissa Good for four runs on five hits. Kailee Becker and Breitbach provided the big hits, with a two-run double and a two-run single to center, respectively.

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The J-Hawks tied it at 5-5 in the seventh when Katelyn Holub doubled in the speedy Guy all the way from first.

After Drahozal, who was knocked flat by a Dighton liner in the inning, opened the seventh with a sharp single, Olson came back to the mound in relief and struck out the last two batters.

Jefferson had runners on second and third in the eighth but left them stranded.

In their half of the inning, the Saints opened with a walk to Steph Wehr and Jenna Schwach beat out a sacrifice bunt. Colston then moved them along.

With one out, Becker laid down a perfect suicide bunt to chase in the winning run.

“We just never lose focus and never get down on ourselves,” said Drahozal of the Saints (now 9-1). “Even when we were losing to Kennedy 7-1, we came back to win 8-7.

“And winning tonight gives a lot of confidence.”