

Drahozal hits timely homer for Saints

Written by Tom Fruehling
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Xavier slugger Erin Drahozal picked the right game to come out of her batting slump Tuesday night.

Pitching the nightcap of a home twinbill against Kennedy, the power-packed freshman was nursing a 3-2 lead going into the bottom of the fourth. Leading off the Saints' half of the inning, she promptly blasted a solo rocket high off the scoreboard beyond left-center for her first home run of the year.

Xavier scored two more runs in the fourth to add to the cushion, winning 6-3 to complete a doubleheader sweep of the Cougars.

Behind a solid performance by mound ace Jacey Wiebold, the Saints won the opener 8-2.

Xavier squared its season marks at 10-10 overall and 9-9 in the Mississippi Valley Conference. Kennedy fell to 7-18 overall and 4-14 in the MVC.

In her second year as a starter, Drahozal was hitting at a .350 clip in the No. 3 spot for the first half of the season before hitting the skids. Dropped down to the fifth spot in the order four games ago, she said the doldrums continued until she broke through with the towering solo shot high over the fence.

"Going 1-for-3 felt good," she said of her showing in the second game after going hitless in the first. "I've had better games but, hey, some players make millions hitting .333."

On the hill, she was coasting along for the first three innings until giving up a double to Heather McKinnon followed by a two-out, two-run homer to Amanda Gaffey.

Kennedy scored again in the fifth inning when pinch runner Sydney Green came home on a wild

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pitch.

As they'd done in the opener, the Saints came out of the chute with a fury. They jumped ahead 3-0 in the first inning, starting with back-to-back singles from Sydney Galligan and Jamie Feltes and a walk to Jenna Schulte to load the bases.

Drahozal brought in the first run herself with a sacrifice fly to center, and Hayley Deutmeyer brought home two more with a sharp single.

The Saints' final two runs in the fourth inning were knocked in by Morgan Breitbach and Courtney Colston.

Drahozal scattered five hits but said her defense saved her from a few scrapes. "Both Hayley (Deutmeyer) and Allison (Schwach) dove for balls that really helped me out," she said.

In the first game, Xavier took an 8-0 lead before Kennedy managed a pair of runs in the fifth inning.

Lead-off hitter Schwach opened with a single in the first and Galligan bunted her way on base. Feltes sacrificed the first run in, and the second came in when a Drahozal pop-up was misplayed.

The Cougars loaded the bases in the top of the second, but Wiebold was able to pitch out of the jam unscathed. For the game, Kennedy left 11 runners stranded.

"We needed to be more aggressive and put the ball in play more," said Cougar Coach Katie Bova. "We struggled at the plate all night. We couldn't get the bat on the ball."

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Their two runs were scored in the fifth on a double by Peyton Baskerville and a single by Gaffey. It was too little too late, however.

The Saints tallied three runs in the second when Galligan drove in two with a triple and Feltes followed with a double. Following consecutive bunt hits by Schwach and Galligan in the fourth, Feltes singled them home and Schulte singled her in.

Xavier interim head coach Nikki Price, subbing again for the recuperating Brian Erbe, was pleased with the back-to-back victories.

“Everything meshed tonight,” she said. “We got good pitching in both games. Defensively, we made some very good plays besides handling the routine ones.

“And we really attacked at the plate. We put runners on and then applied pressure on the bases.

“Everybody contributed, too. They were good wins for us. We just put everything together.”