

Nearad named national Player of Year

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Taylor Nearad of Kirkwood was honored by the NJCAA Division II Softball Committee Tuesday as the 2016 Dudley NJCAA DII Softball Player of the Year.

Saturating the national leaderboard with her numbers, Nearad cemented her name at or near the top of every offensive statistical category this season. The freshman's 145 hits, 129 RBIs, 30 home runs and 114 runs scored all led the nation. Nearad's .602 batting average was the third-highest in the country, while her .622 on-base percentage ranked fourth.

Showcasing her knack for turning in extra-base hits, Nearad ranked third in the land with a 1.195 slugging percentage. Her home runs were complemented by 31 doubles and 11 triples, which ranked second and third, respectively. The center fielder displayed her speed as well, tallying 34 stolen bases to crack the top 15 at the DII level.

Although the Eagles' push for a national title was cut short at the NJCAA DII Softball Championship, Nearad made valuable contributions in Kirkwood's four games. The Solon native was named to the all-tournament

team after posting a .400 batting average with three home runs, two doubles and eight RBIs. One of her best performances of the year came in an 8-7 first-round win over Illinois Valley when she went 4-for-4, recording five RBIs on two home runs and two doubles.

Nearad plans on coming back to Kirkwood for her sophomore campaign in 2017. She has already gained interest from a number of NCAA DI programs, including Iowa, Virginia Tech, Syracuse and Purdue.