

Clutch Eagles will host softball regional

Written by Metro Sports Report
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MASON CITY - The eighth-ranked Kirkwood softball team delivered in the clutch Sunday by sweeping an ICCAC doubleheader from NIACC, 5-3 and 6-4, in the final games of the regular season.

As a result, Kirkwood will host an NJCAA Division II regional tournament this weekend in Cedar Rapids.

Kirkwood (44-13) will face Ellsworth (17-36) in the regional opener Friday at 2 p.m., with NIACC (28-16) meeting Iowa Lakes (17-33) at 4 p.m. in the four-team, double-elimination event.

The second-ranked DMACC Bears, who won the ICCAC title, will be hosting a different four-team regional. Kirkwood finished second in the ICCAC standings behind DMACC.

DMACC and Kirkwood will not meet again this season unless they both reach the NJCAA World Series and meet in the national tournament.

Regional champions advance to district tournaments, and district champions advance to the World Series.

Kirkwood entered Sunday's games with a one-game lead over NIACC in the conference standings. If NIACC had swept the twinbill, the Trojans would have vaulted over Kirkwood in the standings and they would be hosting the regional this weekend.

Kirkwood clinched second place in the standings by winning the first game, 5-3. Jayme Finn belted two solo home runs to power the Eagles. Randy Carter also hit a home run, her ninth of the season.

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Erin Hocker (23-7) tossed a complete game for the victory with 12 strikeouts. Hocker is tied for second in NJCAA D2 with her 23 victories.

Finn went 3-for-3 in Game 1. Rachel Stewart was 2-for-4.

Shelby Hulsebus went 4-for-4 with three runs, three RBIs, a double and her first homer of the season in Game 2. She also had two stolen bases. Autum Barthelman had three steals. Bradee Bouman (19-6) pitched a complete game for the victory.

GAME 1

NIACC 000 102 0 - 3 5 x
Kirkwood 220 100 x - 5 9 0

Hocker and Butler. W - Hocker (23-7). 2B - Stewart. HR - Carter, Finn 2. RBI - Jackson, Albaugh, Carter, Finn 2. SB - Finn.

GAME 2

NIACC 000 040 0 - 4 6 x
Kirkwood 120 102 x - 6 6 1

Bouman and Barthelman. W - Bouman (19-6). 2B - Hulsebus. HR - Hulsebus. RBI - Hulsebus 3, Clemens. SB - Hulsebus 2, Barthelman 3, Finn, Smith 2.