

Jenkins sets table for powerful Eagles

Written by Jim Ecker

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Chasney Jenkins stands just a smidgeon over 5 feet tall, but she plays one of the biggest roles on the powerful Kirkwood softball team as a superb leadoff hitter.

Jenkins gets on base on a regular basis and her teammates drive her in.

The formula worked again Wednesday as the 11th-ranked Eagles overwhelmed Ellsworth Community College, 18-1 and 23-1, in a junior college doubleheader at the Kirkwood diamond.

Both games lasted only 4 1/2 innings.

Kirkwood belted 12 home runs in the twinbill, with six in each game. Lexie Biehl and Brook Prior hit three homers and at one point the Eagles hit four straight home runs. Biehl went 7-for-8 and drove in 14 runs.

Jenkins, a sophomore from East Moline, Ill., is batting .547 with eight doubles, three homers and 31 runs scored in just 20 games. She's 24-for-24 in stolen bases and sets the table for all the sluggers in the lineup behind her.

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"I just get on base any way I can," she said. "Whether it's hit by pitch, base on balls, a hit. I find a way to get on."

Her on-base percentage is an outrageous .755, which means she reaches safely more than 75 percent of the time. She's also a superb bunter and does a good job in center field.

"Power. Speed. A good eye. Makes the pitchers work," said Kirkwood Coach Joe Yegge, listing her attributes as a leadoff hitter.

All that makes Jenkins a terrific table-setter.

"She's great. She's probably one of the best in the country," said Yegge. "She can lay it down, she can read defenses, she can hit the ball hard."



Jenkins is short, but she's strong and extremely quick. She's played softball since she was a little kid and nobody ever dared say she wasn't tall enough to play the game.

"Never," she said, smiling. "I've done it my whole life."

Yegge said Jenkins has developed as a power hitter during her two years at Kirkwood. She was named a junior college All-American last season and is

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playing even better this year.

"She's a gym rat," said Yegge. "I wouldn't be surprised if she's in the weight room tonight or at the Rec Center doing something. She was like that in high school (at Alleman Catholic). She'd play a game, then she'd go and work out."

Jenkins already has a scholarship to Savannah State, an NCAA Division I college in Georgia. She balked the first time Savannah State called, then agreed to see the campus for herself.

"I went for a visit, loved it and committed while I was down there," she said. "It was beautiful."

Kirkwood raised its record to 15-5 overall and 6-0 in the conference with Wednesday's victories. The Eagles have socked 43 home runs in 20 games and have outscored their opponents in six conference games by a whopping 84-3.

"Crazy," said Jenkins. "We hit the ball, though."

Biehl already has eight homers and 34 RBIs. Prior has belted six home runs.

"We had a rough start, but ever since conference started we've bounced back. It's great," said Jenkins.

Tara Walls, Jasmine Ragusi, Allie Mengler, Alicia Crivaro, Lexi Quandt and Riley Ogden all hit home runs Wednesday in the slugfest. Biehl, Ragusi, Walls and Mengler hit four homers in a row in the first game.

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Nicky Simpson, Hannah Cole, Prior and Mengler split the pitching for Kirkwood and breezed through the Ellsworth lineup for the most part.

Ellsworth fell to 2-8 overall and 0-6 in the league.