

Kirkwood stars join MSR softball league

Written by Jim Ecker

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Taylor Nearad and Maddie Hansen will probably play more than 60 games for the Kirkwood softball team next season and finish the campaign at the national tournament.

When the season ends, they'll take a few weeks off and then dive into the new Metro Sports Report summer league for another 20-game campaign.

That tells you everything you need to know about much the two Kirkwood All-Americans love the game.

Nearad, a fleet center fielder from Solon, enjoyed a phenomenal season for the Eagles last season when she hit .602 with 30 home runs and 129 RBIs and was named the Junior College National Player of the Year.

Hansen, a rock-solid catcher from Cedar Rapids Jefferson, hit .455 with 20 homers and 93 RBIs last season when the Eagles compiled a 58-6 record and finished fifth at the national tournament.



Nearad has accepted a scholarship to play at Iowa State after she's finished at Kirkwood next season. Hansen originally planned to play at Ball State this season, but changed her mind and returned to Kirkwood for her sophomore campaign.

Nearad and Hansen joined the Metro Sports Report summer league during the last week. Bria Lenten, a shortstop from Cedar Rapids Washington and Loras College, also joined the league this past week. So did Tawny Menster, a pitcher and outfielder from Anamosa High School and Mount Mercy University.

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[\(CLICK HERE TO REGISTER\)](#)

Ten players have joined the league, which has been formed for all players at Iowa colleges and all Iowans who are playing at out-of-state schools. There's no other league like this in Iowa and the response from players, coaches and softball enthusiasts has been very high.

Erin Kuba from Cedar Rapids Jefferson and Indian Hills Community College was the first player to join. Then came Peyton Baskerville of Kennedy and Mount Mercy, Tianna Drahn of Kennedy and the University of Northern Iowa, Maddy Ryan of Linn-Mar and Coe, Lexi Kinnaird of Clear Creek Amana and Kirkwood, and Mallory McArtor of Mid-Prairie High School and Coe.

A mixture of players from NCAA Division I, NCAA Division III, NAIA and NJCAA schools have already joined the program. The goal is to field four teams with 16 players per team for the summer league, which will consist of 10 straight Sunday doubleheaders from May 28 through July 30 for a 20-game season for everyone.

The games will be played on the college softball fields at Kirkwood and Coe.

The four gold medal sponsors for the Metro Sports Report league are Ironside Apparel, Emil's Hideaway restaurant, Construction Materials and the Barracudas AAU softball program. Play It Again Sports of Cedar Rapids is a silver medal sponsor.

The entire registration process may be handled on-line by clicking on the registration link that accompanies this story. There is a \$100 player fee, but confidential scholarships are available with no paperwork. Nobody will be denied a chance to play for financial reasons.

The Metro Sports Report hopes that all players will play in all the games, but players certainly will be excused for summer vacations, important family functions and job requirements. In addition, full refunds will be automatically granted to anyone who registers now and then is unable to play.

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For more information about the new program, please contact Metro Sports Report president Jim Ecker at jim.ecker@metrosportsreport.com or by calling Ecker at 319-390-4236.