

# Knights strong in the middle

## *Knoch's bats hammer Indiana in 9-1 softball win*

John Enrietto Eagle Staff Writer

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JEFFERSON TWP — The middle of Knoch's lineup was in the middle of the action Tuesday at Laura Doerr Park.

Avery Keller, Erin Luffy and Abigail Black — the Knights' 4, 5 and 6 hitters — collected eight hits in 10 at bats, seven RBI and four runs scored in a 9-1 softball triumph over Indiana.

Knoch and Indiana began the day tied with Mount Pleasant at the top of the Section 1-4A standings.

“Those girls have been hitting the ball consistently all year,” Knights coach Tim Knappenberger said. “Really, our entire lineup has. It's been a total team effort this year.”

Keller opened the scoring in the bottom of the first inning. Despite a strong wind blowing in, the senior catcher launched a two-run homer over the left field fence.

It was Keller's first home run since her sophomore year — and it came on Senior Day, during her final home game.

“It's weird, but I dreamed about hitting a home run on Senior Day last night,” Keller said. “I thought it'd be awesome if that happened and it was.

“I thought it was going to be a pop out when I first hit it. I didn't even know it made it over the fence until I heard everybody cheering.”

Keller also doubled, singled, walked and scored three runs on the day.

“I had been slumping, so this felt really good,” she said.

Luffy had a pair of two-run singles for Knoch and Black contributed three singles and a run batted in.

Keller, Sydney Natili and Jessica Yenick were the Knoch seniors recognized before the game. Natili doubled and was on base when Keller homered.

“That's a good team,” Indiana coach Harold Wilson said. “They are solid everywhere. They hit the ball well against us the last time we played them, too.”

The Knights had 12 hits Tuesday. In the meantime, Celia Knappenberger took a no-hitter into the fifth inning. That was broken up by Harlie Gittings' single up the middle with one out.

The Little Indians spoiled Knappenberger's shutout bid with a run-scoring triple by Cleo McMahan in the sixth.

“I can't figure it out,” Wilson said as to why Indiana's bats awoke late. “We couldn't get a ball out of the infield in the first four innings.”

Indiana has only two seniors and was held to a single run or less for the fourth time this season.

The Knights turned a pair of unique double plays in the final two frames.

With McMahan at third and one out in the sixth, Lauren Bertig hit a comebacker to Knappenberger. The pitcher looked McMahan back to third and threw out Bertig. McMahan broke for the plate and was thrown out by first baseman Luffy.

Indiana loaded the bases on three singles to begin the seventh. Kaitlin Stossel's ground ball then hit a runner for an automatic out, leaving the bases jammed.

Morgan Doolin grounded back to Knappenberger, who began a home to first double play to end the game.

"We practice bases-loaded plays all the time," Coach Knappenberger said. "Our girls know what to do with the ball in those situations. The bases loaded don't bother them at all."

For most of the game, Indiana's lineup didn't bother pitcher Knappenberger.

"They started timing her curve ball late," the Knoch coach said. "When that happens, she has to put a little more spin on it. Celia's drop pitch was effective today. That's a work in progress."

The Knights won for the seventh time in the last eight games. Both of their losses are to section co-leader Mount Pleasant. Knoch closes section play at Highlands Thursday.

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W: Celia Knappenberger 7IP (3K, 1BB). L: Lauren Bertig 6IP (3K, 4BB).

Indiana (7-7, 6-3): Cleo McMahan 3B RBI, Madison Barker 1B, Emma Stossel 1B, Harlie Gittings 2-1B, Alley Bush 1B

Knoch (14-2, 7-2): Sydney Natili 2B, Celia Knappenberger 1B 2-R, Avery Keller HR 2B 1B 2-RBI 3-R, Erin Luffy 2-1B 4-RBI, Abigail Black 3-1B RBI, Natalie Brown 3B, Chalee Durand 1B

Thursday: Knoch at Highlands



## John Enrietto

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I graduated with a Journalism degree from Ohio University in 1979. I started at the Eagle on August 24, 1997. My awards include 2nd place in feature writing from Ohio Associated Press (while working for the Steubenville Herald-Star), media award from Lernerville Speedway and 3rd place in a Pennsylvania AP contest for story feature.

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