

Knoch wins battle of section champs

2-run rally in 6th defeats SV, 7-6

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Seneca Valley's Juia Ehrman manages to get around the attempted tag of Knoch's Monica Gourley at second base Tuesday, May 9, 2017, at Laura Doerr Park. Knoch defeated the Raiders, 7-6.

DAVE PRELOSKY/ BUTLER EAGLE

JEFFERSON TWP — After an early outburst, the fire in Knoch's bats seemed to have been doused by Seneca Valley pitcher Claire Zimmerman.

A few glowing embers remained, however.

The Knights plated four runs on four hits in the bottom of the first, but the only run they managed over the next four frames was an unearned tally in the fourth that tied the game at 5-5.

SV regained the lead with Mandy Magill's RBI-single in the next half inning and when Knoch came to the plate in the bottom of the sixth, it was facing a 6-5 deficit.

A pair of one-out base hits from Celia Knappenberger and Avery Keller sparked a two-run rally as the Knights prevailed 7-6 in a battle between WPIAL section champions Tuesday afternoon at Laura Doerr Park.

Knappenberger moved to third base when Keller's base hit was misplayed in the outfield. The former tied the game when she beat a throw home on a fielder's choice off the bat of Erin Luffy.

Moments later, courtesy runner Madison Holben scored the deciding run on Abigail Black's groundout.

"Our girls have hit the ball well all year," said Knoch coach Tim Knappenberger. "Following our last game (a 10-0 win over Highlands last Thursday), our team batting average was .405. That's pretty good."

Like Zimmerman, Knoch starting pitcher Amanda Fischer got off to a rough start.

Fischer surrendered five runs on seven hits over the first two innings. That spurt included a pair of two-run singles from Olivia Madey and Magill in the first and second inning, respectively.

Fischer settled down in the third, setting the Raiders down in order before being relieved by Celia Knappenberger at the start of the fourth.

"Amanda is a sophomore and I don't know if nerves played a part with her today. Our plan was to see how things went. We knew we could bring in Celia if we needed to, but Amanda has pitched well enough for us this year to be in the circle."

Meanwhile, Zimmerman found her groove. She pitched scoreless second, third and fifth frames and would have done so in the fourth before the error with two outs helped the Knights score their fifth run.

"In the first inning, she (Zimmerman) was getting behind hitters," said Seneca Valley coach George Trew. "When you're down 2-0 and 3-0 in the count, hitters are going to tee off on you. After the first inning, she started throwing strikes. If she had done that from the start of the game, things would have been different."

Not helping SV's cause were four total errors, which led to four unearned runs.

"As a team, we were just flat today," Trew added.

Celia Knappenberger earned the win after pitching the final four innings, allowing the one run on three hits with three strikeouts and no walks.

"When Celia is pitching, we try to start hitters off with a fastball to get that first strike. Most of them aren't going to swing at the first pitch," said Coach Knappenberger. "Then we get to her spin pitches, including her screwball and curveball."

Fischer and Luffy round out Knoch's pitching trio as the WPIAL playoffs loom.

"Celia is the veteran of the group and that's why she has the most starts, but we feel confident using both Amanda and Erin," said Knappenberger.

Seneca Valley (14-5) will enter next week's district playoffs as the Section 3-6A champion while the Knights (16-2) tied Mt. Pleasant for the Section 1-4A crown.

Seneca Valley 320 010 0 – 6 10 4

Knoch 400 102 x – 7 9 1

W: Celia Knappenberger 4 IP (3K, 0BB). L: Claire Zimmerman 6 IP (4K, 4BB).

Seneca Valley (14-5): Morgan Aloï 1B 2B 2R, Julia Ehrman 2-1B 2R, Mandy Magill 3-1B R 3RBI, Maddie Schultz 1B R RBI, Olivia Madey 2-1B 2RBI

Knoch (16-2): Sydney Natili 2B R, Monica Gourley R, Celia Knappenberger 2-1B 3R RBI, Avery Keller 3-1B 3RBI, Erin Luffy 1B RBI, Abigail Black 1B RBI, Chalee Durand 1B, Madison Holben 2R

Thursday: Freeport at Knoch; Blackhawk at Seneca Valley



Derek Pyda

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- Graduated from Connellsville High School in 1996
- Graduated from Clarion University in 2000 with a Bachelors in Communications
- Have also written for Clarion News (Clarion, PA) and the Herald-Standard (Uniontown, PA)

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- Interests include sports, history and geography