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Sports

Indians fall in season opener to Wapahani

By Sean Douglas

For the first time since May 2019, the Mississinewa Indians played a softball game.

While it was a gorgeous evening for softball in Gas City, back-to-back offensive outbursts for the Wapahani Raiders in the third and fourth innings proved to be the difference, as the Indians were defeated 16-5 in five innings in their home opener on Wednesday evening.

Mississinewa got off to a solid start in the first inning, scoring the game's first run. Senior Kylie Smalley led off with a single, and Kayrissa Dunn drove her home with two outs, giving the Indians an early 1-0 advantage.

However, the Raiders took control from there. After scoring two runs in the top of the second to take

a 2-1 lead, Wapahani scored 10 runs on nine hits in the third, sending 14 batters to the plate, eleven of whom came around to score. Wapahani added four more runs in the fourth, increasing its advantage to 16-1.

"We didn't maintain it after that first inning," Miller said. "We didn't sustain it at all."

Despite the large deficit, however, the Indians began to show signs of their potential in the latter stages of the contest. Four straight singles from Kaycee Sands, Lexi Smith, Haileigh Hickman, and Carys Blake led to a pair of runs, as the bottom half of the lineup showed patience at the plate and waited for their pitch.

"They didn't quit. They didn't quit at all," Miller said. "Wapahani was hitting the ball really well. We've got some young pitchers and

some young players, but they didn't quit. They'll be fine."

Mississinewa nearly extended the game past the fifth inning, loading the bases and scoring a pair of runs with nobody out. Katy Hosier started the frame by reaching on an error. Then, after back-to-back walks to Dunn and Amaris Hickman and two straight RBI singles from Sands and Smith, the Indians drew within 11. However, a strikeout, a pop fly, and a fly out to center field prevented any more runs for the Indians, ending the scoring threat and securing the Raiders' victory in the process.

Smith put together a tremendous offensive performance in the opener, finishing 3-for-3 with a double, a run scored, and one run batted in.

From the leadoff spot,

Smalley finished with two singles and reached base safely three times, showcasing speed and power at the top of an Indians' lineup, which is full of youth and inexperience.

"She's got some real good base sense when she's on," Miller said. "She is going to be the kid that leads them. She does well."

Sands finished 2-for-3 from the dish with an RBI and a run scored, while Hickman also drove in a run for the Indians.

And while they came out on the losing end, the Indians, and Head Coach Steve Miller, were just happy to be back on the field.

"It's just real nice to be out here and playing," Miller said. "It was a beautiful day. It looked like it was getting cloudy a little bit, but it ended up beautiful."



Kandis Downam fires a pitch in Mississinewa's season opener against Wapahani. **Photo by Sean Douglas**

Evans becomes single-season strikeout leader in Taylor's split with No. 10 Indiana Wesleyan

By Sean Douglas

After another stellar performance in the circle, Maddi Evans (11-3) made history on Friday evening in Marion, becoming Taylor's single-season strikeout leader in the Trojans' 8-1 triumph over No. 10 Indiana Wesleyan in game one of the second two-game set between the longtime rivals.

The Fairmount native recorded her seventh double-digit strikeout effort of the season, and third against

ranked or RV opponents, punching out 13 Wildcats to continue her historic junior campaign. Evans now has 163 strikeouts, passing Holly Tomaszewski, who recorded 161 in the 2010 season for the Trojans.

Evans' trend of strong performances against top-tier competition continued against the Wildcats. Along with her 13 strikeouts, the junior allowed just four hits and two walks in her seventh complete-game outing of the season.

Evans had plenty of sup-

port from the offense as the Trojans recorded 10 hits, four of which were for extra bases. Taylor Wilson led the way, finishing with two hits, including her first home run of the campaign, two runs scored, and two runs batted in. Ashton Whitman went 2-for-3 from the dish, driving in a pair of runs, while Evans helped her own cause with a hit and two RBI.

After a scoreless first three innings, Taylor opened the scoring with a pair of runs in the top of the

fourth. Lauren Kanai led off the frame with a double to left field, and Kristin Mihalic followed with a single, putting two runners on base with nobody out. Evans took advantage, hitting a two-run single to give the Trojans an early advantage.

Indiana Wesleyan cut the Trojan lead in half on Miranda Wehrle's solo home run in the bottom of the fourth, but Taylor blew the contest open in the fifth, scoring five runs on four hits. Aleyah Rastetter plated

Nicole Brindle with a double to left-center field, before coming around to score on a Wilson RBI fielder's choice. Whitman followed with a single to left-center, plating Mihalic and Wilson, and Caitlyn Grim capped off the rally with a base hit to right, scoring Whitman for the 7-1 advantage.

Wilson added a little more insurance in the top of the seventh, hitting her first round-tripper of the year to left field to secure the victory.

The Trojans scored the

first run of the nightcap in the second inning, taking advantage of a pair of Wildcat errors, but the home team plated two runs in the bottom of the third, ultimately securing the 2-1 win. Chloe Tragresser hit an RBI double, scoring Becca Wyatt, before Wehrle singled home Jennah Yost for the final tally.

Whitman recorded the Trojans' lone RBI in the second contest, while Rastetter, Wilson, Emma West, and Kara Tucker each recorded one hit apiece.

Strong pitching in nightcap highlights RV Taylor's split with Spring Arbor

By Sean Douglas

Behind a stout combined pitching performance from Lauren Kanai and Cassy Lewis in game two, RV Taylor salvaged a doubleheader split with Spring Arbor, defeating the Cougars 3-1.

Kanai (9-5) recorded her ninth victory of the season, striking out three and allowing only one run in six innings of work. The Grand Rapids,

Michigan native pitched out of trouble in both the third and fourth frames, crucial outs with Spring Arbor runners in scoring position.

The Cougars had a runner on third base with two outs in the third, but Kanai ended the threat by inducing a groundout to third for the final out.

Spring Arbor was able to put one run across in the fourth and had another runner on third

with only one out, but a strikeout and a fly out helped Kanai escape another jam.

Lewis pitched a scoreless seventh, recording her Crossroads-League leading sixth save in the process. Additionally, Lewis' six saves are the most for a Taylor pitcher in a single season, surpassing Sarah Heath (four – 2012) and Darby Shaw (four – 2019).

The Trojans scored

single runs in the second, third, and fifth innings, which proved to be all they needed. Kara Tucker started the scoring in the second frame, singling home Ashton Whitman for the 1-0 advantage. Maddi Evans added to Taylor's lead in the third, plating Taylor Wilson with a two-out single for her team-leading 26th run batted in this season.

Wilson added a little

insurance in the fifth, scoring Kristin Mihalic on a two-out double for the final 3-1 tally.

Wilson and Evans each finished 2-for-4 with an RBI in the game two triumph, while Tucker and Emma West both collected two hits in three at-bats.

The Trojans struggled in the opener, dropping a 5-0 decision to the Cougars and being shut out for just the third time

this season. While Taylor recorded six hits, only one was for extra bases, and only one Trojan baserunner advanced past second base.

Despite the defeat, Evans recorded nine more strikeouts against the Cougars, giving her 150 on the season. The Fairmount native now needs just 12 more punchouts to become the Trojans single-season leader.