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## Sports

# Trojans secure single-season win record

## *Wildcats grab automatic bid to National Championship*

By Sean Douglas

No. 4 seed Taylor went toe-to-toe with No. 2 seed and cross-county rival Indiana Wesleyan in a battle for the Crossroads League Tournament Championship on Saturday.

Taylor forced a winner-take-all second contest with a 5-0 shutout victory in the first championship game, but came up just one run short in the nightcap, falling 6-5 on a Wildcats' walk-off sacrifice fly.

With a chance to play for their first CL Tournament Championship since 2014, the Trojans put together one of their finest performances of the season in the opener, blanking one of the top offenses in the entire NAIA.

Maddi Evans (23-4), after picking up crucial wins over RV MVNU and No. 9 Marian the day before, recorded her most impressive victory of the season, allowing just four hits while striking out 12 Wildcats in her 14th complete-game performance. Additionally, the junior collected her sixth shutout triumph, her fifth victory against a team ranked or receiving votes, and her second win against Indiana Wesleyan this season.

The Trojan offense provided all the support that Evans needed early in the contest, plating four of their five runs in the first three innings. In the second, after Lauren Kanai reached base on a Wildcat fielding error, Caitlyn Grim brought her home with an RBI groundout, giving the Trojans a 1-0 advantage.

Taylor tacked on three



**Aleyah Rastetter (16) celebrates her three-run home run with her teammates in the Crossroads League Tournament Championship Game.**

more runs in the bottom of the third, building their lead to 4-0 on a bases loaded walk to Kristin Mihalic, a sacrifice fly from Taylor Wilson, and another Wildcat miscue.

While the Trojan offense scored runs, Evans kept the lethal Wildcats' lineup at bay, stranding six IWU runners in the first three innings while recording at least two strikeouts in five of the seven frames she pitched.

The Trojans added a little insurance in the sixth inning as Kara Tucker doubled home Emma West, who reached base on Indiana Wesleyan's fourth error, for Taylor's fifth and final run.

Freshman Aleyah Rastetter finished 3-for-3 from the dish with a run scored in the opener, while Tucker collected two hits in her three plate

appearances.

The Wildcats struck first in game two, scoring a pair of runs in the first frame. Miranda Wehrle scored the game's first run on a Taylor error, before a Chloe Tragresser sacrifice fly increased Indiana Wesleyan's lead to 2-0. However, the Trojans pushed back, scoring four unanswered runs to take a 4-2 lead in the top of the fifth frame. Ashton Whitman cut the Wildcats' lead to 2-1 on an RBI single in the fourth, before Rastetter launched her 10th home run of the season, a three-run shot, to center field in the fifth.

Indiana Wesleyan scored three straight runs to regain the advantage at 5-4 heading into the top of the seventh. Tragresser hit an RBI single in the fifth, before Rebecca Schrad scored on a bases-

loaded walk and Wehrle recorded an RBI groundout in the sixth. However, on a 1-2 count in the top of the seventh, Evans crushed her team-tying 11th round tripper of the season to center field, setting the stage for potential extra innings.

However, the Wildcats pulled out the victory, plating the game-winning run with a one-out sacrifice fly by Kamryn Buck.

At the conclusion of the 2021 Crossroads League Tournament, the Trojans finished with 43 wins, their most in a single season in program history, which included three straight triumphs over RV MVNU, No. 9 Marian, and No. 6 Indiana Wesleyan to punch their ticket to the championship contest.

Throughout Taylor's tournament run, Evans'

star shined the brightest. In seven games, the Fairmount, Indiana native compiled a 5-0 record in the circle, allowing just 12 runs in 32.2 innings pitched while striking out 38, increasing her season total to 263. Along with her single-season strikeout and wins record for the Trojans, Evans also boasts the lowest opposing batting average (.183), second-most shutouts (6), and third-lowest earned run average (2.24) in a single season.

At the plate, Evans dominated, collecting eight hits and a team-high four home runs and nine runs batted in, ending the Crossroads League Tournament as the Trojans' leading run producer with 48 RBI. Additionally, her 11 home runs ties her with Mihalic for the

third-most home runs for a Trojan in a single season.

Rastetter capped off her first Crossroads League Tournament in style, batting 10-for-23 with four runs scored and five runs batted in, while Tucker finished with nine hits and five RBI in seven tournament contests.

Indiana Wesleyan (44-6) will join Marian as one of the two Crossroads League representatives in the National Tournament, collecting the second automatic bid by winning the Crossroads League Tournament Championship.

Taylor (43-18) will now wait to see if it will receive an at-large bid to the 2021 NAIA Softball National Championship. The Selection Show slated for Tuesday evening, May 11.