

Swedes seek a win and a little respect

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Gothenburg softball coach has heard it before and he'll hear it again this weekend as the Swedes play in the state softball tournament for the sixth time in the last eight years.

"All the other coaches give me (guff) about us and our district," he said. "I'm apologizing to nobody about where I live and where I coach."

"I can't control who is in our district and who our teams are. We had the easiest district on paper and it probably proved that way by scores."

Eastern Nebraska has been the traditional hotbed for the better softball teams. Although the wins aren't many for Gothenburg at the state tournament, the Swedes have played competitive ball with the better teams there.

If the Swedes are to gain a measure of respect at state this year, it will have to come initially against No. 1 seed Wahoo. The Warriors bring a 25-6 record with one victory and three losses to teams in the Class C state bracket. All four of those games came against cross-town rival Bishop Neumann who is rated No. 1 in Class C by the Omaha World-Herald.

"They are very solid defensively," Neujahr said of the Warriors. "They have a pitcher who throws above average speed. She spots the ball with a nice little change-up every now and then."

Senior Michaela Miller owns a 22-6 record with an earned run average of 3.04.

"They are very patient hitters," the Swede coach said. "They wait for their pitch, that's what I saw in the two games against Wahoo Bishop Neumann and Logan View."

Neujahr scouted them the weekend before the district tourney when the Swedes were open.

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The senior-dominated Warriors are led at the plate by senior shortstop Taylor Otte who carries a .560 batting average.

“Seeing them, hopefully, gives us an idea how to pitch them,” Neujahr said. “The change-up is going to be the key for us to keep their bats down.”

In the opposite bracket, Fillmore Central/Exeter-Milligan takes on Wayne. The winner and loser will face their Gothenburg-Wahoo counterpart in the next round. The loser’s bracket game is at 4:30 p.m. Wednesday while the winners will play at 9 a.m. Thursday.