

Explosive hitting attack powers Swedes to return trip to state

Written by Gothenburg Times
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Hits Galore!

The bats came alive for Gothenburg in the Class C-6 district tournament earning the Swedes a berth in the state tournament for the sixth time in the last eight years.

Gothenburg posted double-digit hits for all three games, which included two that were shortened to four innings.

The Swedes more than doubled their home run output for the season with five roundtrip shots by two players. Senior Emily Franzen and junior Becca Riley both tied Franzen's record set last year of two home runs in a game. Riley set a new school record with six runs batted in against Chase County in the championship game.

A change of a bat and added confidence may have made the difference for Riley.

"We got another slugger with an adjustment during the week," Swede coach Roger Neujahr said. "That was good to see Becca come around like that."

Neujahr approached the junior at practice the previous Monday with the suggestion that she try a bat that is one ounce lighter since she was hitting a lot of pop-ups.

"Maybe a one ounce lighter bat might get it through a little more," the coach said.

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The first pitch in batting practice was hit off the outfield fence. Four pitches later she hit one over.

“She just kept ripping it through the week,” Neujahr said.

Gothenburg’s offensive firepower wasn’t limited to home runs. The Swedes also hit eight doubles in the tournament.

Gothenburg puts its 19-7 record up against top-seed Wahoo at 25-6 in an 11:30 a.m. contest at Hastings (see separate story for preview).

Little by little wins



The Swedes may have connected for 14 hits in an 8-0 win over Blue Hill in the opener, but no more than two runs were scored in any one inning.

Becca Riley got things started for Gothenburg with a solo home run in the first inning. It was the start of a 4-for-4 game at the plate for her with five runs batted in.

Kyndal Holmes followed later with a run-scoring double to put the Swedes on top 2-0.

Back-to-back doubles by Riley and Emily Franzen powered another two-run rally in the third inning.

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Two seemed to be the magic number as a pair of runs were again added in the fourth and sixth inning. Riley's single with the bases loaded drove in both in the fourth.

The game ended early when Riley repeated with a two-RBI single in the sixth inning.

Blue Hill twice moved runners to third base, but they were stranded there. A pair of double plays by the Bobcats limited the scoring damage for the Swedes.

Kylee Beyea joined Riley as an offense leader with three singles and a pair of runs in four at-bats.

Karleigh Kleinknecht gave up four hits while fanning six batters and walking one.

Homers put Swedes on top

Emily Franzen's two home runs powered Gothenburg to a 14-4 victory over Chase County in the district tournament semifinals.

Those two homers capped an outstanding offensive display that saw her go 4-for-4, with a double and single also, for five RBIs.

"She had a great game," Neujahr said.



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Franzen's RBI single broke the ice for Gothenburg in the first inning. Her two-run homer over the right-center fence came toward the end of a six-run rally for the Swedes in the second inning.

The Longhorns added a single run in the bottom of the second and, after Gothenburg was blanked in the third inning, scored two more to cut the deficit to 7-3.

Franzen opened the fourth with her second roundtripper and it was followed by doubles from Kyndal Holmes and Ashley Eskew and a single by Kerry Wellmann. When the dust settled, Gothenburg had added seven more runs to the lead.

The Longhorns' solo tally in the bottom of the fourth wasn't nearly enough.

Rebecca Anderson earned the pitching victory giving up four hits in four innings of action.

Wellmann had three singles in three at-bats.

Grand slam paves the way

Becca Riley blasted a pair of home runs over the left field fence leading Gothenburg to a 10-0 victory over Chase County in the district championship game.

Riley's first home run came in the first frame with pinch runner Cassidy Kottwitz on base. The sacks were filled for her in the second inning and she responded with a grand slam home run to make it 6-0.

"When she hit the grand slam, I think that definitely took any fire away from Chase County," Neujahr said.

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A pair of runs scored for Gothenburg in the third inning on a wild pitch and a catcher's error. Two more came home for the Swedes on RBI singles in the fourth by Ashley Eskew and Ebony Anderson.

Karleigh Kleinknecht boosted her record to 8-3 with the win. She struck out seven batters, walked a pair and allowed two hits. Only two baserunners reached second base.

"Karleigh was hitting her spots most of the time," the coach said.