

Monday, May 24, 2010

EASTERN SOFTBALL THIRD IN NATIONAL TOURNAMENT

Nation's top offensive team eliminates Warriors in losers' bracket final, 10-1

EAU CLAIRE, Wis. – Eastern Connecticut State University did not let the nation's top two home run hitters beat it, but Linfield College had plenty of other weapons to eliminate the Warriors in the losers' bracket final of the NCAA Division III national softball tournament Monday by a 10-1 score. The game was stopped after five innings due to the eight-run rule.

Coming off its first loss in 27 games in Sunday night's winners' bracket final against East Texas Baptist University, Linfield (42-6) parlayed two singles and two walks into two first-inning runs against Eastern (39-6-1) sophomore All-America **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)**, utilized two suicide squeeze bunts, a hit, walk and Eastern error to chase Rathbun (30-2) in adding three more in the third, then piled on five more runs with five hits in batting around in the fourth.

“Linfield came out strong, they're a great hitting team,” noted ninth-year Eastern head coach **Diana Pepin** afterward. “They're a great team and they'll do well (in the final). We played a little tight, though. I felt that we lost a little bit of what got us here, and that was having fun and playing the game. We competed every day that we were here and we had fun, but today was just a little bit more of a challenge. I don't know if we were tired or not, but that's not an excuse. We should have played our style of softball.”

While the 2007 national champion Wildcats have made their reputation as the top power-hitting team in Division III with the most home runs (77) and No. 1 slugging percentage (.609), they took a chapter out of Eastern's playbook. Seven of eight hits were singles for Linfield, which scored twice on squeeze plays and ran themselves into several scoring situations with opportunistic baserunning.

In fact, the only home run of the game was Eastern's and it came from an unlikely source. Trailing 5-0 in the top of the fourth, the Warriors got on the board when lefty-hitting all-region rightfielder hitter **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** drove her second home run of the season over the right field fence to apply the only blemish to Linfield junior lefty Claire Velaski's (20-3) ledger. Velaski, who shared the Wildcats' pitching duties during the season, fanned four without a walk and held the Warriors hitless until Alicea's leadoff blast down the right field line leading off the fourth.

In its first national tournament appearance in 18 years, Eastern placed third in the original field of eight. The Warriors, who tied the program record for wins in a season, won three elimination games in two days after being mercy-ruled by Christopher Newport University in Friday's opener, 8-0. Rathbun did not pitch in that game after coming down with the flu Thursday afternoon, but the two-time All-America strikeout artist returned to start and defeat Moravian College Saturday and DePauw University and Christopher Newport Sunday. Rathbun returned to the mound against Linfield for the 1 p.m. ET start after throwing a complete game in Sunday night's late game against CNU.

Batting 3-4 in the lineup, sophomore Stacy Doucette and freshman Karleigh Prestianni were held hitless by Rathbun and Silva, but Division III's home run co-leaders (with 19 each) reached in five of their six plate appearances, scoring each time. Doucette walked twice (one intentionally) after flying out to center in the first and Prestianni walked, and reached on an error and fielder's choice.

Linfield's heavy lifting was done by No. .6 hitter Jaydee Baxter and No. 8 hitter Sami Keim, each of whom drove in three runs despite managing only one hit apiece. Baxter's two-out single in the first staked the Wildcats to a quick 2-0 lead and her suicide squeeze plated the second run of the three-run third. Keim authored the second suicide squeeze of the third inning – Eastern failing to execute what could have been an inning-ending double play by dropping the bunt before throwing Keim out at first – and drove in two runs with a single in the five-run fifth.

The loss ended a program-record 27-game winning streak for Rathbun, who was credited with all 11 of the team's post-season victories. Rathbun broke numerous season and career records this season and additionally led the club with a .402 batting average. Alicea was second to Rathbun with a .393 batting average and team-high 59 hits and senior centerfielder **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)** finished at .392.

In five national tournament games, Rathbun was 3-1 with a 1.91 ERA, 18 strikeouts and eight walks in 22.0 innings. She gave up only two extra-base hits. Batting at the top of the lineup, Alicea (.714) and Sullivan (.571) led the club in batting. Sullivan drove in six runs and scored five and had a .647 on-base percentage. Alicea had a team-high ten hits and .733 on-base percentage.

As a team, the Warriors committed only two errors (both against Linfield which accounted for two unearned runs) for a .982 percentage in the tournament. They set a program season record for fielding (.977) for the second straight year. The team's final win total ties the season record initially set during the 1985 national championship season. The Warriors' .875 regular-season winning percentage also established a regular-season record and their final overall winning percentage of .867 trails only the record of .872 set when the program won its most recent of five national titles in 1990.

The NCAA appearance is the program's third straight for the Warriors under Pepin, the starting third baseman on the 1990 national titlist. This season, she became the second coach in program history to win 200 games. Pepin (207-148-1) has guided the Warriors to five straight 20-win seasons and this year, to its first outright regular-season conference title and first conference post-season championship and first regional championship since 1992.

"Eastern has had a tradition of winning and we've gotten back that tradition," said Pepin. "And that's a testament to the players that we have. We are where we want to be... or where I want them to be."

Sunday, May 23, 2010

EASTERN CONTINUES UPHILL BATTLE WITH TWO VICTORIES

At national softball tournament, Warriors are among three remaining teams in field of eight

EAU CLAIRE, Wis. – **Katie Dinihanian (Stratford)** spent the majority of the season cheering on her teammates. Her teammates spent Sunday night cheering on the senior leftfielder.

In Eastern Connecticut State University's third elimination-round victory in two days, Dinihanian drove in her first two runs of the season with her first hits of the tournament, and scored twice from first base on doubles by senior centerfielder **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)** as the Warriors posted a 5-2 victory over Christopher Newport University on the third day of the 2010 NCAA Division III national softball tournament at Carson Park.

Eastern (39-5-1) continues its march toward a sixth national title – first in 20 years – when it faces Linfield College in the losers' bracket final Monday at 1 p.m. ET. Linfield lost the all-important winners' bracket final earlier Sunday by a score of 6-2 to East Texas Baptist University, which needs one victory to wrap up its first national title.

The Eastern-Linfield winner must come right back to face East Texas Monday at 3:30 p.m. ET. If needed, a one-game winner-take-all contest would be played Tuesday at noon ET.

In the first game of the day Sunday, the Warriors had avenged a regular-season eight-inning loss to DePauw University with an emphatic 8-1 triumph.

Sullivan and **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)**, the top two hitters in the Eastern lineup, reached five times with four hits and a hit by pitch, and Dinihanian had three hits batting out of the No. 9 slot in the order.

Dinihanian had missed 28 games after pulling a muscle in her leg in the sixth game of the season, finally returning to left field in time for the NCAA regional tournament. In addition to her offensive heroics Sunday, Dinihanian played a steady left field. She recorded three putouts in the late innings by catching fly balls, and her quick return throw to the infield on a batted ball which short-hopped the left field wall nearly erased CNU cleanup hitter Jessica Atkinson sliding into second.

Sophomore All-America **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** won her 30th game against one loss (27th straight), throwing a complete-game six-hitter and striking out four as Eastern tied the 25-year-old record for wins in a season. Battling the night's extreme humidity, Rathbun was unable to retire the pesky Captains once in order, but never gave up more than one hit in an inning after the first.

With Rathbun unable to perform Friday due to a case of the flu, Christopher Newport (42-10) had beaten Eastern 8-0 in the tournament opener. Sunday, the Captains reached Rathbun early, but the Warriors went ahead for good on Dinihanian's two-out, two-run single in the bottom of the fourth, and added an insurance run in the sixth after there were two out and none on when Dinihanian singled ahead of Sullivan's double.

In four tournament games, Sullivan has reached base 11 times with eight hits and three walks. She is 8-for-11 with a tournament-high seven RBI, five runs scored, two doubles and two home runs. Alicea, who recorded her 100th career hit in the fifth inning in just 81 games, is also 8-for-11.

Sunday, May 23, 2010

EASTERN SOFTBALL ALIVE IN NCAA NATIONAL TOURNAMENT

Offense backs Rathbun with 11 hits in 8-1 win over DePauw

EAU CLAIR, Wis. –For the first time in 48 career starts, Eastern Connecticut State University sophomore All-America Molly Rathbun (Hebron) did not strike out a batter. What she did do Sunday afternoon was help keep the Warriors alive in the NCAA Division III national softball tournament.

Rathbun (29-1) avenged her only loss of the season by limiting DePauw University (40-9) to four hits and one run over six innings, and all-region outfielders Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull) and Priscilla Alicea (Stratford) combined to reach base seven times with six hits and a walk, score four runs and drive in two as the Warriors won their second straight tournament game after an opening loss.

Eastern (38-5-1) is scheduled to play its third elimination game in two days Sunday night at 8:30 p.m. ET against the winner of a 3:30 p.m. game between Luther College and Christopher Newport University. Without Rathbun (flu) in its tournament opener Friday evening, Eastern was shut out by Christopher Newport, 8-0 – its worst national tournament loss ever in 57 games.

Two months ago, Rathbun also pitched a four-hitter against the Tigers but lost what would be her only game to this point when DePauw scored two unearned runs in a 2-0, eight-inning win on the spring trip at Clermont, FL. The Tigers entered Sunday's game with a .345 team batting average and had struck out an average of only three times per game.

Sunday's victory was Rathbun's 26th straight this season, and although she did not strike out a batter as a starting pitcher for the first time ever (and for only the second time in 63 career appearances), she retired 15 hitters on popups – including seven straight after sophomore rightfielder Holly Paris stroked a two-out solo home run which hit the top of the left field fence and bounced over in the fourth to make it 4-1. Eastern's defense, ranked No. 2 nationally, backed Rathbun by making several impressive catches on foul balls in the first three innings, and also got a sliding sno-cone grab by junior leftfielder Katie Dinihanian (Stratford) to end the sixth inning.

Paris' home run ended a program record streak of 48 2/3 scoreless innings for Rathbun, who has given up runs in only two of her last 18 appearances and in only ten of 34 appearances this season.

Batting leadoff for the second straight game (second time in her career), Sullivan reached safely all four times with her fourth home run with two outs in the fourth, two singles and a walk. She walked to start the bottom of the first and scored the first run, drove in the third run of the game with a single in the second, homered in the fourth to answer Paris' in the top of the inning, and singled to greet relief pitcher Kristin Barrow and scored in the sixth. Alicea, the team's regular leadoff hitter, had a sacrifice bunt to build the first run of the game in the first, singled to drive in pinch runner

Courtney Weber (Groton) to make it 3-0 in the second, singled in the fourth and collected her 98th hit in only her 80th career game and scored in the sixth.

Batting third, Rathbun raised her team-leading batting average to .419 by reaching three times with two singles and a walk. She drove in Sullivan with the first run of the game in the first inning. Cleanup hitter Katie O'Toole (Waterbury) plated two runs with a single in the first and a ground ball in the sixth.

Stopped on four hits by DePauw senior Megan Soultz (29-7) in Florida, Eastern had eight hits in five innings this time against Soultz, the three-time Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference Pitcher-of-the-Year who ends her career ranked among Division III's all-time leaders in a number of career categories. By winning, Rathbun also ties Soultz for the most wins by a pitcher in Division III.

In three national tournament games, Sullivan and Alicea are a combined 12-for-16 with five RBI and four runs. Both have six hits, Sullivan adding five RBI and four runs scored. In 11 post-season tournament games (four in the Little East Conference), the Warriors have committed only two errors and are batting .306. Now 27-2-1 in its last 30 games, Eastern is within one victory of tying the program season record for wins, set during the 1985 national championship season.

Saturday, May 22, 2010

RATHBUN PITCHES ONE-HITTER AT NCAA SOFTBALL

EAU CLAIRE, Wis. – Sophomore All-America **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** pitched a complete-game one-hit shutout and senior centerfielder **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)** hit a three-run home run in the bottom of the fourth inning as the Eastern Connecticut State University softball team remained alive in the NCAA Division III national tournament with a 3-0 win over Moravian College Saturday afternoon at Carson Park.

With the win, Eastern (37-5-1) advances to play Sunday at 1 p.m. ET against the loser of Saturday night's game between DePauw University and Linfield College.

Rathbun (28-1) did not pitch in Friday's 8-0 opening loss to Christopher Newport University due to illness but returned to win her 25th straight decision by limiting Moravian (34-15) to two baserunners – a two-out walk in the fourth and a leadoff single in the fifth. Rathbun struck out 13, her final one representing her 300th of the season.

Eastern stranded five runners through the first three innings before scoring the only runs of the game when Sullivan rapped a 1-0 pitch over the left field fence for her third home run of the

season. Senior shortstop **Kim Church (Farmington)** walked to open the fourth, moved to second on a single to center by sophomore **Kassondra Silva (Hamden)** and both runners later scored on Sullivan's three-run blast off complete-game loser Elizabeth Python (6-4).

Rathbun struck out at least one batter in every inning, fanning seven over the first three innings in recording her 17 shutout of the season and tying the season record with her 25th complete game. In the game, she also broke her own program record for consecutive innings without an earned run and Christia Mohan's record for consecutive scoreless innings. She has now pitched 45.0 straight scoreless innings.

Sophomore rightfielder **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** had three of Eastern's six hits, with Silva adding two and Sullivan one with her home run.

In nine post-season starts this year (conference and NCAA), Rathbun is 9-0 over 59 2/3 innings with eight shutouts, nine complete games, 102 strikeouts and 14 walks and a 0.59 ERA. She has allowed 22 hits, 18 of them singles.

Rathbun has set season records this year for wins, consecutive wins, strikeouts, and shutouts. The one-hitter was her seventh of the season (to go along with two no-hitters) and 12th of her career.

After batting in Rathbun's No. 3 spot in the order Friday and collecting three hits, Sullivan batted leadoff Saturday for the first time this season.

EASTERN SOFTBALL BEATEN IN NATIONAL TOURNAMENT OPENER, 8-0

By Bob Molta on May 21, 2010 9:35 PM

In five-inning loss, All-America pitcher Molly Rathbun sidelined with flu

EAU CLAIRE, Wis. -- Competing in the NCAA Division III national softball tournament without the nation's most accomplished all-around player, Eastern Connecticut State University sustained an 8-0 loss to Christopher Newport University Friday night at Carson Park in its first national tournament appearance in 18 years. The game was stopped after five innings due to the eight-run rule

Above: Ashley Sullivan digs for third base in the fourth inning of Friday's loss.

With first-team All-America pitcher and leading hitter **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** sidelined with the flu, No. 12-ranked Eastern (36-5-1) gave up three runs in the first inning and five more in the third against the nation's 11th-ranked team in dropping into a Saturday elimination game at 2:30 p.m. ET. The Warriors will face Moravian College, an 8-4 loser to East Texas Baptist University in Friday's late game.

Making only her sixth start of the season, first-year Division I sophomore transfer **Kassondra Silva (Hamden)** lost her first decision after two wins after giving up six runs on three hits and four walks. The first four Christopher Newport (41-8) batters reached base in the bottom of the first when the Captains pushed across three runs on two hits, two walks, two stolen bases, a passed ball and wild pitch. Batting .318 as a team, CNU batted around in chasing Silva in favor of freshman **Christine Akcer (Milford)** in the five-run third. Jennifer Falin and Taylor Morgan greeted Akcer with back-to-back two-run hits in the inning.

All-region senior pitcher Kristen Rowe (23-4) scattered four hits in posting her ninth shutout. She fanned five and walked two. Rowe had a no-hitter until all-region centerfielder **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)** singled with one out in the fourth with the Warriors trailing 8-0. Senior first baseman **Katie O'Toole (Waterbury)** doubled Sullivan to third and a walk loaded the bases with two outs before Rowe got a swinging strikeout to end the threat.

Batting in Rathbun's No. 3 spot in the order, Sullivan reached safely each time up with two hits and a walk. Sullivan and No. 9 hitter sophomore **Rosie Manzo (Hudson, MA)** were the only Eastern runners to reach third.

Rathbun, named a first-team All-America Thursday night, began suffering flu symptoms following the team's practice session Thursday afternoon, according to head coach **Diana Pepin**. Rathbun was treated at a local hospital and released Thursday night. Her status for the remainder of the tournament is uncertain.

Rathbun is 27-1 with a 0.61 ERA and 16 shutouts and has won a record 24 straight games and leads the club with a .420 batting average, 36 RBI and 83 total bases.

Sunday, May 16, 2010

EASTERN SOFTBALL WINS REGIONAL TOURNAMENT

All-America Molly Rathbun (Hebron) pitched her fourth straight shutout and Arielle Cooper (Mystic) doubled leading off the top of the ninth and scored the only run of the game one batter later on an infield throwing error as the top-seeded Eastern Connecticut State University softball team qualified for the NCAA Division III national tournament for the 12th time with its win over the third-seeded U.S. Coast Guard Academy Sunday afternoon in the championship game of the Wellesley, Massachusetts Regional, hosted by Wellesley College.

A winner of 14 straight and now 25-1-1 in its last 27, Eastern (36-4-1) faces Newport News, Virginia Regional champion Christopher Newport University in the opening round of the eight-team, double-elimination national tournament at Eau Claire, WI. Christopher Newport defeated 2009 national champion Messiah College twice in its regional tournament.

A sophomore, Rathbun (27-1) outdueled USCGA sophomore Hayley Feindel for the second time in extra innings this season. Rathbun, who has won a program record 24 straight decisions, fanned 14 and walked one and gave up six hits to lead the Warriors to their first regional championship since 1992. Eastern won the last of its five national championships in 1990, when current ninth-year head coach Diana Pepin was the starting third baseman.

Cooper, a freshman, had the only extra-base hit of the game with a double to right-center leading off the ninth. Sophomore Kim Church's (Farmington) sacrifice bunt was then thrown past first to allow Cooper to score the only run of the game.

Coast Guard stranded five runners in scoring position, three of them at third base. The Bears loaded the bases in the fourth on two hits and a walk, but Rathbun got two strikeouts to end the threat. Rathbun also left a runner on second in the third with a strikeout and escaped in the seventh when she caught a pop up to leave runners on the corners. Coast Guard put its leadoff runner aboard in the eighth and a ground ball moved her to third before Rathbun got a swinging strike to end the inning. Given the 1-0 lead, Rathbun pitched a 1-2-3 ninth, fanning Jamie Kim on four pitches to end the game as she equaled her second-highest strikeout total of the season.

After hitting a Little East Conference tournament-ending home run last weekend, Rathbun nearly gave the Warriors a 1-0 lead in the first but Coast Guard centerfielder Carin Sweeney made an outstanding catch pressed up against the center field fence for the final out. The Warriors left five runners at second base through the first eight innings but no runner reached third until Cooper touched the bag in scoring the go-ahead run.

Rathbun, who has won the team's last eight games, fanned 47 and walked eight and gave up eight hits (all singles) in 28 tournament innings. She was joined on the all-tournament team from Eastern by senior first baseman Katie O'Toole (Waterbury), sophomore righthfielder Priscilla Alicea (Stratford) and Church. Batting cleanup, O'Toole was 4-for-11 in the tournament and drove in two runs in each of the first three tournament games. She walked twice in the final. Church was 3-for-10 with two RBI in the opener and Alicea, the leadoff hitter, Alicea was 5-for-14 with three RBI and three runs scored. Rathbun was 0-for-3 with a walk and had an 11-game hitting streak snapped.

Molly Rathbun:

“Our motto all year has been to go out , have fun, and do what we do best. It’s been a whole team effort this year, not just the starters, but on the bench and on

the field. We've had everyone contributing and keeping each other up. We have great team chemistry and we love playing together and it's gotten us this far."

"Coast Guard is a great team – it was a 1-0 game in nine innings. They just made one little blunder. They have a great team and one team just outlasted the other, and that's about it."

"I had great defense behind me. All I had to do was put the ball on the corner (of the plate) and let the defense do the work."

Saturday, May 15, 2010

TOP-SEEDED EASTERN SOFTBALL ROLLS OVER BRANDEIS, 7-0

Rathbun tosses one-hitter as Warriors move to within a victory of national tourney berth

WELLESLEY, Mass. -- Sophomore All-America righty **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** pitched her third straight complete-game shutout at the NCAA Division III Wellesley, Massachusetts Regional Softball Tournament in top-seeded Eastern Connecticut State University's 7-0 win over second-seeded Brandeis University Saturday afternoon.

Behind Rathbun's (26-1) 23rd straight win, Eastern (35-4-1) moves within a win of qualifying for its first NCAA Division III national tournament in 18 years. The former five-time national champions will face the winner of Saturday's noon game between Brandeis and third-seeded U.S. Coast Guard Academy Sunday at 2 p.m. Eastern is the tournament's only remaining undefeated team. If Eastern loses at 2 p.m. Sunday, a deciding game is scheduled for Monday at 10 a.m.

Rathbun, who has won the team's last seven games, pitched her 12th career one-hitter against Brandeis (29-8-1) in a battle of the top two-ranked teams in New England, defeating the Judges for the second time this season. Rathbun fanned 12 and walked four, striking out seven straight early in the game. The Judges managed their only hit when the game was scoreless in the third inning. After fanning the first two batters of the inning, Rathbun walked a batter and gave up a single to center to No. 2 hitter Marianne Specker before getting a ground ball to end the inning.

In the game, Rathbun extended her current scoreless streak to 29 innings, the last 19 coming in the tournament. In three tournament games, she has fanned 33 and walked seven and allowed only four hits. In Friday's 2-0 win over Rivier College, she tossed her second no-hitter in her last six starts.

Winners of 13 straight, Eastern scored at least one run in each of its final four at-bats to break the game open, collecting 11 hits off three Brandeis pitchers in the game. Batting fifth and sixth in the order, corner infielders **Katie O'Toole (Waterbury)** and **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)** each had two hits and two RBI and leadoff hitter **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** had two hits and scored three runs.

Alicea drove in **Katie Dinihanian (Stratford)** from second with a single for the first run of the game in the third, and **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)** plated Alicea with a triple to make it 2-0. O'Toole contributed RBI singles in the fourth and fifth and Cooper knocked in two runs in the fifth with a single. Rathbun hit safely in her 11th straight game with a single in the fifth, and her pinch runner, **Courtney Weber (Groton)** eventually scored.

Eastern and Coast Guard split a regular-season doubleheader April 5 in New London. Rathbun outdueled USCGA sophomore ace Hayley Feindel in the first game, 3-2 in eight innings, pitching a one-hitter and striking out 14. The Bears won the nightcap, 4-2. Rathbun did not pitch in the second game while Feindel pitched all 15 innings of the doubleheader, surrendering seven hits in each game.

The Warriors last won as many as 35 games in 1989, when they captured 36. The program record for victories came during a 39-9 season in 1985 when they claimed the third of their five national championships.

SOFTBALL: MOLLY RATHBUN NO-HITS RAIDERS IN SECOND ROUND OF NCAA

By Bob Molta on May 14, 2010 10:16 PM

Warriors 2-0 in regional

WELLESLEY, Mass. -- Eastern Connecticut State University's **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** threw a stellar no-hitter to defeat Rivier College, 2-0, in the winner's bracket semifinal on Friday afternoon in the NCAA Regional Softball Tournament at Wellesley College.

With the win, the Warriors advance to the winner bracket final on Saturday at 2pm. against Brandeis University. Rivier moves to the loser bracket, where they will face Salem State on Saturday at 10am.

Both pitchers -- Rathbun and Rivier's Monica White -- dominated the game through the fifth inning. Neither squad could muster much offense as Rathbun held Rivier hitless and struck out nine in the first five frames, while White scattered three harmless hits and fanned six during the same stretch.

Eastern broke the ice in the top of the sixth, when **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)** and Rathbun led off with back-to-back singles. Then, with two outs, **Katie O'Toole (Waterbury)** doubled down the left field line, giving the Warriors a 2-0 edge. Rathbun then retired six straight Rivier batters to secure the win.

Sullivan was 3-for-3 for the Warriors. Rathbun, O'Toole, **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)**, and **Kim Church (Farmington)** tallied hits for Eastern as well, with O'Toole hammering the game-winner. Rathbun (25-1) finished with 11 strikeouts while walking three in her second no-hitter of the season.

Despite a strong outing, White took the loss for Rivier, giving up seven hits and two runs while fanning seven.

Courtesy of Wellesley College Sports Information

SOFTBALL: WINS NCAA OPENER

By Bob Molta on May 13, 2010 1:51 PM

WELLESLEY, Mass. -- Eastern Connecticut State University, seeded #1 in the NCAA Softball Regional at Wellesley College, used dominant pitching and timely hitting to down #8 Husson University, 8-0, in five innings Thursday morning in the first round of the NCAA tournament. Eastern (33-4-1) advances to Game #7 against River College, to be played Friday, May 14, at 2pm. Rivier defeated Bowdoin College in Thursday's second game. Husson (28-14) moves to Game #5, Friday at 10a.m.

At left: Kim Church

Eastern got on the board in the bottom of the second when **Kim Church (Farmington)** led off with a walk and advanced to second on a sacrifice bunt from **Katie Dinihanian (Stratford)**. **Rosie Manzo (Hudson, MA)** followed with a single, pushing Church to third with one out. The Warriors then capitalized on a Husson miscue to score both runners for a 2-0 edge. Two innings later, **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** singled up the middle to score Dinihanian and push the lead to 3-0.

Eastern broke the game open in the fifth, when **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** and **Kassondra Silva (Hamden)** opened the inning with back-to-back singles. A single to center from **Katie O'Toole (Waterbury)** plated two for a 5-0 lead. Church followed with a two-run double for 7-0 lead, before an illegal pitch scored the game-ending run.

For Husson, Cassie Berry, Lona Sargent, and Courtney Hill notched one hit each. Kody Lyon took the loss for the Eagles, giving up seven runs and seven hits in 4.2 innings of work.

For Eastern, Rathbun and Silva tallied two hits each, while Alicea, O'Toole, and Church recorded two RBI a piece. Rathbun was over-powering in the circle, fanning 10 while scattering three hits to move to 25-1 on the season.

Rathbun broke the 24-year-old program record for strikeouts in a season in the game. She now has 250, five more than previous recordholder Kim Durocher.

Game account courtesy of Wellesley College Sports Information

Sunday, May 9, 2010

EASTERN SOFTBALL CLAIMS FIRST LITTLE EAST CHAMPIONSHIP

Tourney MVP Rathbun pitches five-hitter and delivers walk-off home run in 1-0 win

KEENE, N.H. – All-America utility player **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** pitched a complete-game five-hitter with 12 strikeouts for her fourth tournament win and belted a walk-off solo home run leading off the bottom of the eighth inning to end a scoreless duel and carry the No. 11 nationally-ranked and top-seeded Eastern Connecticut State University softball team to its first Little East Conference tournament title Sunday against second-seeded Keene State College at the Owl Athletic Complex.

A winner of three straight tournament games after an opening loss in the six-team, double-elimination tournament, Keene (26-14-1) needed to beat Eastern twice Sunday in order to claim its fifth title in the 13-year history of the tournament. Keene had advanced to face Eastern Sunday after eliminating Western Connecticut, 8-2, Saturday in the only game played due to rain.

The victory was the 200th in the nine-year head coaching career of **Diana Pepin** (200-146-1), a third baseman on the program's fifth and most recent national championship team in 1990.

A winner of ten straight and now 21-1-1 in its last 23 games, Eastern (32-4-1) qualified for its third straight NCAA tournament – 17th in program history.

"I won't accept anything but their very best," said Pepin of her team, which has won 30 games for the first time since 1994, "and we keep striving for that. As (current assistant coach and former head coach) Coach Washburne says, we haven't arrived anywhere yet, and that's the truth, but we keep going at it and keep getting better and better and better. We're not satisfied."

The NCAA tournament gets underway Thursday with regional tournaments. Rhode Island College will host the New England Regional Tournament, although Eastern has been shipped to New York and New Jersey the last two seasons after receiving at-large berths to the tournament. The automatic bid is the first-ever for the Warriors, who had reached the tournament championship round twice previously, most recently in 2005 when they lost to Keene State.

"The seniors stepped up," said Pepin. "And Molly is a great competitor but she wants nothing more than for the team to be successful. She will do anything for the team to win."

A winner of a program-record 20 straight decisions, Rathbun (23-1) had only one 1-2-3 inning through the first five but retired the final ten in order for her program-tying 12th shutout of the season. Her 23rd win also establishes a season mark, breaking the old mark set in 1990 by Christia Mohan and equaled the next year by Donna Poyant.

(more)

Since returning from its spring trip, Keene has been shut out only twice – both times by Rathbun. On April 25, Rathbun also pitched a five-hitter with 12 strikeouts in a 3-0 Eastern win over the host Owls.

Leading off the bottom of the eighth, Rathbun drove a 0-1 pitch from Keene sophomore righty Courtney Savoie (9-5) on a line over the center field fence for her team-high ninth homer of the season – seventh in the last 14 games. In her previous at-bat leading off the sixth, Rathbun had lined a double high off the center field fence but Eastern left the go-ahead run on third because of a botched stolen base attempt. “But we hung tough and stayed strong and we didn’t let it detour us,” noted Pepin. “And Molly comes up big all of the time.”

The unanimous tournament MVP, Rathbun won all four of the team’s games with a 1.42 ERA, 42 strikeouts and four walks in 24 2/3 innings and batted .727 (8-for-11) with a double, two home runs, five RBI and an .800 on-base percentage.

Rathbun allowed runs in only one game – a 10-5 victory over third-seeded Western Connecticut in Friday’s winners’ bracket final. Western had six hits – including two home runs – of f Rathbun, who was lifted from the game for the first time this year. She returned to record the final six outs, however, and earn credit for the win.

“Western is a very good hitting team,” pointed out Pepin. “We called for a lot of fastballs, and they caught up to them. We didn’t change up as much as we did (against Keene). We threw a lot more changeups today and they were fishing for them. We mixed speeds very well today, and we did what we’re supposed to do.”

Eastern committed only one error in the tournament – that coming against Keene on a dropped foul ball which prolonged the at-bat of No. 3 hitter Katie Bradford with two out in the fifth. Bradford eventually ground a 1-2 pitch back at Rathbun, who knocked it down and threw the runner out from her knees.

Sophomore leftfielder **Rosie Manzo (Hudson, MA)** brought a .172 batting average into the tournament but was second only to Rathbun with a .545 average (6-for-11) as the Warriors outscored their opponents 24-5 and had twice as many hits. Freshman third baseman **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)** had a 13-game hitting streak ended against Keene, but batted .364 (4-for-11) in the tournament.

Molta, Bob (Athletics)

From: Kaufman, Stuart [skaufman@keene.edu]
Sent: Sunday, May 09, 2010 2:37 PM
To: news@keenesentinel.com; news@monadnockradiogroup.com; sports@unionleader.com; Staton, Jamie F; King, Jason S; sports@courant.com; sports@cmonitor.com; sports@vnews.com; destey@eagletimes.com; sports@bristolpress.com; sports@seacoastonline.com
Cc: Molta, Bob (Athletics)
Subject: LITTLE EAST SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT: RATHBUN LEADS ECSU TO FIRST CHAMPIONSHIP

LITTLE EAST SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT OWLS FALL TO WARRIORS 1-0; RATHBUN LEADS ECSU TO FIRST CHAMPIONSHIP

KEENE, N.H. 5/9/10 – Sophomore Molly Rathbun demonstrated why she is an All-American at Owl Athletic Complex on Sunday. The sophomore from Hebron, Conn., tossed a complete-game five-hitter with 12 strikeouts and hit a walk-off home run in the bottom of the eighth inning to lead top seed Eastern Connecticut State University to a 1-0 win over second seed Keene State College and the program's first Little East Conference softball championship.

"I knew one swing could make a difference either way," said KSC Coach Charlie Beach.

With the victory, Eastern Conn. (32-4-1) receives the LEC's automatic berth to the NCAA tournament while Keene State (26-14-1), which came out of the loser's bracket to reach the championship round of the tournament, will await a possible at-large NCAA berth or return to defend its ECAC New England crown.

Sophomore Courtney Savoie (Stratham, N.H.) and Rathbun hooked up in the pitching duel. Savoie kept the Warriors off-balance, allowing one run on seven hits with one strikeout and two walks. Savoie said it was the best game she's pitched all season. "I just tried to work the corners, keep my spin tight, and induce a lot of pop-ups," she said. "One pitch determined the game. She hit that ball hard."

"I'm proud of my teammates. They all played great," Savoie added. "The defense behind me was spectacular. I couldn't ask for anything more."

Keene State had a couple opportunities to score, but couldn't get the key hit. In the second, freshman Nicole Dupuis (Fitchburg, Mass.) and sophomore Samantha Pratt (Bristol, Conn.) both singled, but were left stranded. The Owls also got two runners on base in the fifth inning.

"Molly is a tough pitcher. Give her credit," said Beach. "She shut us down and we couldn't get that big hit."

Rathbun's record improved to 23-1 with the win.

Savoie (9-5) got out of a huge jam in the sixth inning when Rathbun led off with a double and moved to third on an infield single by sophomore Kassondra Silva (Hamden, Conn.). With runners on first and third and nobody out, Silva was caught stealing, freshman Arielle Cooper (Mystic, Conn.) struck out and senior Kim Church (Farmington, Conn.) flied out to end the threat.

Rathbun, who just missed a home run in the sixth, didn't miss her next time at bat, leading off the eighth inning with a tower drive over the fence in centerfield for her ninth home run of the season.

After the game Beach told his players to hold their heads up. "They played a great game and got beat by a really good team," he said. "They represented Keene State and the conference very well."

Pratt, who doubled in the fourth, had two of the Owls' five hits.

Sophomore Rosie Manzo (Hudson, Mass.) had two hits for the Warriors.

ECSU Coach Diana Pepin, who earned her 200th career victory, and the Warriors will find out their NCAA opponent when the field is announced later today.

Keene State was looking for its fifth LEC title. They won the championship in 1999, 2000, 2003, and 2005.

Thursday, May 6, 2010

RATHBUN PITCHES, HITS EASTERN SOFTBALL TO LEC VICTORY *All-America pitches one-hitter with 13 strikeouts and hits two-run home run*

KEENE, NH -- Sophomore All-America **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** pitched a complete-game one-hitter with 13 strikeouts and no walks and drove in two runs with a home run to lift the top-seeded and No. 11 nationally-ranked Eastern Connecticut State University softball team to a 3-0 win over sixth-seeded Plymouth State University Thursday morning in the opening game of the 2010 Little East Conference Softball Tournament at the Owl Athletic Complex.

Now 18-1-1 in its last 20 games and a winner of seven straight, Eastern (29-4-1) advances in the winners' bracket of the six-team tournament Friday at 10 a.m. to face the loser of Thursday's 2 p.m. game between No. 4 seed Rhode Island College and No. 3 seed Western Connecticut.

Rhode Island is the four-time defending tournament champion while Eastern is chasing its first title in the 13-year history of the tournament.

Rathbun (20-1) extended her program record for consecutive wins to 17 with her second win in as many decisions this year over Plymouth (13-21), facing only one batter over the minimum of 22. She set down the first 11 batters she faced and the last ten. In between, No. 3 hitter Allie Luisi doubled with two out in the fourth as the only Panther to reach base.

Eastern scored the only run Rathbun would need after there were two out and none on the second on back-to-back doubles by the last two hitters in the order -- freshman **Kelly Paterson (Southington)** and sophomore leftfielder **Rosie Manzo (Hudson, MA)**. Rathbun made it 3-0 with two out in the fifth on her team-leading eighth home run of the season, scoring Manzo, who had led off with a single up the middle. The home run was the sixth in the last 11 games for Rathbun.

Rathbun had three of Eastern's nine hits and Manzo two. Rathbun was 3-for-3 to raise her team-leading batting average 20 percentage points to .418. In three wins this season over Plymouth, Rathbun has thrown two shutouts in two starts with 21 strikeouts and no walks, allowing four hits in 12 innings. Offensively against Plymouth, she is 6-for-8 with five RBI.

The conference tournament win was the first after two losses a year ago for Rathbun, who suffered shin splints over the final weeks of last year that made her 0-4 in conference and NCAA tournament play as a freshman. The victory for Eastern ended a streak of four straight conference losses for the Warriors, who lost two straight in 2008 after winning their first two and dropping both of their decisions a year ago.

Rathbun reached 200 strikeouts for the second time in as many years, moving to within 13 of a program record for career strikeouts. Rathbun has pitched 296 2/3 career innings. Current strikeout leader Christia Mohan pitched 621 in her four-year career.

Eastern's recent surge has allowed it to move up eight spots in the this week's NFCA Division III national poll. The Warriors are tied for 11th with Christopher Newport University. Rathbun's only loss this season was an eight-inning 2-0 setback to No. 13 DePauw University (32-5) March 24. Both DePauw runs were unearned.

Eastern need one victory to reach the 30-win plateau for the first time since finishing 32-15 in 1994.

Friday, May 7, 2010

KEENE, NH – Sophomore All-America **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** may be a central figure in the Eastern Connecticut State University softball team's bid for its first Little East Conference playoff championship, but the team's success revolves around speed and defense. And if conference opponents thought that the Warriors were indeed a one-man band, they found out differently Friday afternoon.

In the winners' bracket final against third-seeded Western Connecticut State University, freshman third baseman **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)** hit a three-run home run in the top of the first inning to ignite Eastern's nine-run explosion in the first two innings as the top-seeded Warriors moved to within a win of their first LEC championship with a 10-5 victory over the Colonials at the Keene Athletic Complex.

In the team's first game of the day, Rathbun hurled her first collegiate no-hitter as the Warriors mercy-ruled four-time defending tournament champion Rhode Island College, 10-0, for the second time in six days.

Now 20-1-1 in its last 22 games, No. 11 nationally-ranked Eastern (31-4-1) is the only remaining unbeaten team in the original field of six in the double-elimination tournament. Western (21-17) faces second-seeded Keene State College (25-13-1) Saturday at noon. The winner of that game needs two wins later that day over Eastern to win the title and gain the automatic bid to the NCAA Division III tournament. Eastern has qualified

for the NCAA tournament each of the last two years on an at-large basis.

Western became the first team this year to knock Rathbun out of the game – hitting two home runs in a stunning five-run, third-inning uprising – but they were unable to knock the Warriors out of the winners' bracket.

Eastern played flawless defense for the third straight game in the tournament, utilized its remarkable team speed to reach safely six times in the game on either infield hits or bunt singles, and got 2 1/3 innings of shutdown relief pitching from first-year sophomore **Kassondra Silva (Hamden)** that stemmed the tide and allowed the Warriors to regroup for its third win over Western this year without a loss.

Rathbun failed to complete a start for first time in 20 starts this season, but tied the program season record for wins with her 22nd victory against a single loss and managed to extend her program record with her 19th straight pitching win. Rathbun also broke the career strikeout record of 429 with the third of her seven on the afternoon, needing less than half the number of innings to overtake former recordholder and national Player-of-the-Year Christia Mohan.

With Eastern seemingly on cruise-control with an early 9-0 advantage, Rathbun was knocked out of the game when Western struck for five runs in the third – getting a two-run home run from Danielle Basciano and a three-run shot from Anna Levesque – only the fourth and fifth home runs allowed this season by Rathbun. After Silva pitched 2 1/3 solid innings,

Rathbun returned to close out the win, recording the final six outs after Western put its first two runners aboard in the sixth. Silva, who has evolved into the staff's No. 2 pitcher, held Western scoreless on five hits while fanning one and walking two (one intentional).

While Western rallied after being down nine after two innings, the Colonials never brought the tying run to the plate and stranded eight runs from the third through sixth innings. And in an effort to match Eastern's "small-ball" attack, the Colonials ran themselves out of potential big inning in the fourth when Basciano was gunned down by Eastern senior first baseman **Katie O'Toole (Waterbury)** trying to go from first to third on an infield ground ball. That baserunning blunder took the wind out of the sails of Western, which couldn't capitalize on two infield singles in that fourth inning that would have further eroded Eastern's once comfortable lead.

The first three Eastern batters reached on infield singles or bunts to spark the Warriors' six-run second inning, and Western did its part with two errors. Sophomore leadoff hitter **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** drove in the first two runs with a single past first baseman Katelyn Farrell, and O'Toole drove in the final two runs of the inning with a two-out single to center.

In addition to her three-run home run – her fifth HR of the season – Cooper walked and scored in the second and sixth, and reached on a bunt single in the fourth, extending her current hitting streak to 13.

In addition to seeing its ace roughed up for the first time this season, Eastern also overcame tough luck to score ten runs for the second straight game. Facing three different pitchers (Brittany Connors returned in relief after getting the hook after only one inning), the Warriors lined out no less than five times in the game, with the Colonials turning two of the smashes into double plays.

The win was the 199th in the nine-year coaching career of Eastern head coach **Diana Pepin**, who has already led this year's team to its winningest season in 16 years.

Friday, May 7, 2010

KEENE, NH -- Eastern Connecticut State University sophomore All-America Molly Rathbun (Hebron) struck out ten of the 16 batters she faced, recording her first collegiate no-hitter in a 10-0, 5 inning victory over four-time defending Little East Conference tournament champion Rhode Island College in the second round of the 2010 LEC softball tournament, hosted by Keene State College.

Now 2-0 in the six-team double-elimination tournament, top-seeded Eastern (30-4-1) plays again at 4 p.m. against the winner of a noon game between No. 3 Western Connecticut and No. 5 University of Southern Maine. Those two teams will be the only remaining undefeated teams in the tournament. The tournament championship round gets underway Saturday at 10 a.m.

The win is the 18th straight for Rathbun (21-1), who brought ten one-hitters into action. Ranked No. 1 in New England and No. 11 nationally, the Warriors are 19-1-1 in their last 21 games and 22-2-1 up north. Rhode Island (24-13) was eliminated in two games after winning the last four LEC tournaments.

Rathbun struck out the first six batters she faced and the last three. She allowed only one ball out of the infield. The closest thing to a hit came with two out in the fourth, when Eastern freshman second baseman Kelly Paterson (Southington) ranged to her left to field a ground ball in the first base-second base hole and throw out cleanup hitter Chelsi Panarelli by a step.

Leading 1-0, Eastern broke the game open by batting around in the third and scoring seven runs on five hits and two Rhode Island errors. Eastern's first eight runs were unearned due to four Rhode Island infield errors.

Rathbun, sophomore DP Kassondra Silva (Hamden) and senior shortstop Kim Church (Farmington) all drove in two runs and sophomore rightfielder Priscilla Alicea (Stratford) and senior centerfielder Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull) both scored two runs at the top of the order.

Rathbun moved to within two wins of setting a season record for pitching wins and within three strikeouts of breaking the career record of 429, set by Christia Mohan in 621 innings. Rathbun is 37-8 in her career in 301 2/3 innings. She has allowed only one (earned) run in her last 45 innings.

Sunday, May 2, 2010

EASTERN SOFTBALL WRAPS MOST SUCCESSFUL REGULAR SEASON
Warriors' winning percentage of .864 best in program's 34-year history

STORRS, Conn. – The Eastern Connecticut State University fastpitch softball team concluded its winningest Little East Conference and most successful regular season in program history with a 3-1, 5-0 sweep of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Sunday afternoon at the University of Connecticut softball complex.

Prior to the doubleheader, Eastern (28-4-1, 13-1 little east) was already assured of its first outright conference championship in 15 years of LEC competition and its second No. 1 tournament seeding in the last three years. The sweep wraps up the program's winningest LEC regular season, with the team winning one more game than in 2008.

The final .864 winning percentage is the highest in the regular season in the program's 34-year history and the win total is its highest in regular-season play since the 1994 club won 31 games prior to the NCAA tournament.

The six-team, double-elimination Little East Conference tournament is scheduled for this Thursday through Saturday at second-seeded Keene State College. Eastern is unable to host the tournament as the No. 1 seed because it is temporarily without a home facility.

Against UMass Dartmouth (7-22, 0-14 little east) in the first game, sophomore All-America righty **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** broke the program record with her 16th consecutive pitching victory and became the third pitcher in program history with as many as 400 strikeouts. Rathbun (19-1) owned a no-hitter until losing pitcher Brittany Eldridge (Raynham, MA) socked a leadoff home run in the fifth that sliced Eastern's 2-0 lead in half. The run was the first allowed by Rathbun in eight games and 34 1/3 innings.

In the second game, first-year sophomore righty **Kassondra Silva (Hamden)** recorded her first complete game and shutout in five starts. She scattered three hits without walking a batter. She struck out a career-high seven and didn't walk a batter for the first time in 13 appearances this year.

In the first game, senior centerfielder **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)** gave Eastern a 2-0 lead with a two-run home run to left. Sullivan plated sophomore rightfielder **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)**, who was hit by a pitch. After allowing only her third home run of the season in the top of the fifth to Eldridge, Rathbun returned the favor by belting a solo leading off the bottom of the fifth – her team-leading seventh.

(more)

In the second game, Sullivan had three more hits -- including a triple -- and freshman DP **Katie Sokoloski (Eastford)** had her first two collegiate hits and first three RBIs in her first career start. Batting eighth, Sokoloski drove in the first run of the game with a two-out double. She walked in the fourth and made it 5-0 in the fifth with a two-out, two-run single.

Freshman third baseman **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)** and Sullivan extended hitting streaks in the doubleheader. Cooper has hit safely in ten in a row and Sullivan seven.

In the doubleheader, Sullivan had five hits and ten total bases. She scored twice and drove in two runs. Cooper had four hits and Sokoloski, senior first baseman **Katie O'Toole (Waterbury)** and Silva two each.

UMass Dartmouth was limited to five hits in the doubleheader and received only one walk from Rathbun and Silva. In addition to pitching two complete games, Eldridge (4-14) had two hits, including a double and home run. Sophomore first baseman Kaitlin Hogan (Tewksbury, MA) and sophomore catcher Hannah Rounds (Lincoln, RI) collected the team's other extra-base hits with doubles.

Needing two strikeouts to reach 200 in a season for the second straight year, Rathbun is ranked third all-time with 404 strikeouts. She needs 26 to break 1990 national Player-of-the-Year and Eastern Hall of Famer Christia Mohan's program record of 429. Mohan set the record in 621 innings. Rathbun has pitched 289 2/3 innings thus far, having won 35 of 43 decisions with a 0.70 ERA. Rathbun's only loss this season came against DePauw University March 24 in Clermont, FL, a 2-0, eight-inning decision. She did not allow an earned run in that game.

Game storys 05/01/2010

SOFTBALL: EASTERN LEC CHAMPION

By Bob Molta on May 1, 2010 8:36 PM

Warriors shut out five-time defending regular-season champs twice

STORRS, Conn. -- The Eastern Connecticut State University fastpitch softball team clinched its first outright Little East Conference softball regular-season championship and the playoff's No. 1 seed with 9-0, 1-0 wins over five-time defending regular-season champion Rhode Island College Saturday afternoon at the University of Connecticut softball field. The first game was stopped after six innings due to the eight-run rule.

In 2008, Eastern had shared the regular-season title -- it's only regular-season title in the first 12 years of conference softball play -- after sweeping Rhode Island on the final day of the regular season.

In the opener, senior righty **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** tied the program record for consecutive pitching wins (15) with a six-hit complete-game shutout - her ninth shutout and 15th complete game in 15 starts. Ranked among the national top five in three pitching categories, Rathbun (18-1, 0.57) recorded the final six outs of the nightcap to earn her second save. She allowed a sixth-inning double but got two pop-ups to end the inning and stranded the tying run on first in the seventh after issuing a two-out walk.

In the team's last ten wins, Rathbun has eight wins and a save. She has now pitched 30.1 consecutive innings without allowing a run.

Eastern scored the only run of the second game in the bottom of the first inning on sophomore pitcher **Kassondra Silva's (Hamden)** two-out RBI single which plated senior centerfielder **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)** from second. Sullivan had singled with one out and moved to second on a ground ball.

In the first game, sophomore leadoff hitter **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** and No. 2 hitter Sullivan combined for five of the team's 11 hits. Alicea doubled and scored three runs, Rathbun drove in two runs with a double in the sixth and freshman third baseman **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)** hit a solo home run when Eastern scored five unearned runs in the first on three hits and two Rhode Island errors.

A first-year transfer from Division I Iona College Silva (1-0) gained her first career win in her fourth decision by pitching the first five innings of Game 2. Silva struck out three and walked three and gave up only a first-inning double. Silva stranded that runner on second and worked out of a jam in the third when Alicea turned a fly ball into an inning-ending double play when she threw out a runner at the plate.

Eastern closes out the regular season Sunday with a conference doubleheader against the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth at noon at the University of Connecticut.

Tuesday, April 27, 2010

FASTPITCH SOFTBALL

EASTERN CONN. 5, TRINITY COLLEGE 0

EASTERN CONN. 6, TRINITY COLLEGE 2

HARTFORD, Conn. — Sophomore righty **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** won her 14th straight game and extended her consecutive shutout streak to 22 1/3 innings and freshman third baseman **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)** homered in each game as the No. 19 Eastern Connecticut State University softball team swept Trinity College in a non-conference doubleheader, 5-0, 6-2 Tuesday afternoon.

Rathbun (17-1) tossed her eighth shutout in 15 starts this year in the opener, winning her 14th straight decision. She pitched a two-hitter with eight strikeouts and Cooper drove in three runs with a three-run home run in the sixth.

In the second game, senior centerfielder **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)**, Rathbun and Cooper all homered and four Eastern (24-4-1) pitchers combined on the mound as the Warriors improved their record to 16-2-1 since returning from Florida.

Ranked No. 2 in New England, Eastern scored five runs in the top of the seventh in the second game to erase a one-run deficit and Rathbun struck out the side in the bottom of the inning. Freshman pinch hitter **Kelly Paterson (Southington)** led off the top of the seventh with a double and freshman pinch runner **Courtney Weber (Groton)** tied the game on an infield error. Sullivan and Rathbun followed with home runs, Sullivan's giving the Warriors a 4-2 lead.

In the sweep, Cooper drove in four runs and had two hits to extend her hitting streak to six. Sophomore **Kassondra Silva (Hamden)**, who did not figure in the decision as the second-game starter, had three hits in the twinbill, and Sullivan had three hits, two RBI and two runs scored.

Freshman righty **Christine Aker (Milford)** won her sixth game in eight decisions in relief in the second game. She allowed only two hits and no runs before giving way to Rathbun to start the seventh. Rathbun has not allowed a run in her last five appearances. The streak began when she pitched 4 1/3 scoreless innings in an 8-3 win at the University of Southern Maine three days ago.

Eastern visits Bridgewater State College in a non-conference doubleheader Thursday at 3:30 p.m

Sunday, April 25, 2010

RATHBUN STOPS KEENE AS EASTERN SOFTBALL SPLITS DOUBLEHEADER
Warriors retain two-game lead in Little East Conference standings after second-game loss

KEENE, NH – Sophomore All-America **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** pitched a complete-game five-hitter with 12 strikeouts and hit her third home run in four games to lead the Eastern Connecticut State University softball team to a 3-0 Little East Conference win over Keene State College in the first game of a doubleheader Sunday morning at Keene Athletic Complex.

In the second game, Keene (20-11-1, 7-3 little east) handed Eastern (22-4-1, 9-0 little east) its first conference loss with an 8-2 victory that broke Eastern's overall 12-game unbeaten streak (11-0-1).

In the opener, Rathbun (16-1) stymied the Owls for the second time in as many career starts, whiffing 12 and walking two and scattering five hits to post her 14th shutout in 35 career starts and equaling her win total of a year ago. Less than 24 hours earlier, Rathbun had tied the Eastern record with 16 strikeouts in an 8-3 conference win at the University of Southern Maine. Rathbun has won the team's last seven games.

Rathbun provided the only offense Eastern would need in the first game when she poked a two-run home run to center to break a scoreless duel with Keene sophomore righty Courtney Savoie. The homer was her team-leading fifth of the season. All-region sophomore outfielder **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** was aboard on Rathbun's home run. She walked to open the inning and moved to second on a sacrifice bunt by all-region senior centerfielder **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)**. In the seventh, freshman third baseman **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)** singled, stole second and came across on Alicea's two-out single to add an insurance run that came in handy after Keene loaded the bases in the bottom of the inning. Rathbun left the bags loaded with a game-ending strikeout.

Eastern wheeled out regular leftfielder **Rosie Manzo (Hudson, MA)** to make her second start of the season on the mound in the second game, and the Owls extracted revenge. Keene collected ten hits – half for extra bases – and scored two runs in four different innings. All four Eastern pitchers saw action, with Rathbun finally restoring order by striking out the side in the sixth in her only inning of work.

Senior **Katie O'Toole (Waterbury)** came off the bench to knock in both Eastern runs with a pinch two-run single in the fourth that cut Keene's lead in half. Cooper and sophomore second baseman **Christine Yeomans (Durham)** began the two-out rally with singles and Manzo walked to load the bases for O'Toole, who drove in her 11th and 12th runs of the season.

(more)

Batting at the top of the lineup, all-conference sisters Haley and Laura Chandler of Keene combined for five hits, six runs and three RBI. Laura scored the first run of the game in the first inning and Haley made it 3-0 in the third with a leadoff home run. Haley also doubled in a run in the fourth and singled and scored in the sixth.

Eastern holds a two-game lead in the conference standings with four regular-season games to play. Defending champion Rhode Island College began the day tied with Keene with a 6-2 conference record and was hosting UMass Boston in a doubleheader beginning at 4 p.m. The Warriors are looking for their first LEC outright title in 15 years of regular-season LEC competition.

Eastern hosts Massachusetts Dartmouth in a conference doubleheader Monday at 3 p.m. at the University of Connecticut softball field.

Molta, Bob (Athletics)

From: Kaufman, Stuart [skaufman@keene.edu]
Sent: Sunday, April 25, 2010 4:32 PM
To: Molta, Bob (Athletics)
Subject: Keene State-EConn Softball story

KEENE STATE SOFTBALL: OWLS SPLIT WITH #19 WARRIORS

KEENE, N.H. 4/25/10 - The Keene State softball team split a Little East Conference doubleheader against Eastern Conn. State University at Owl Athletic Complex on Sunday.

Eastern Conn. won the opener 3-0 behind sophomore All-America Molly Rathbun (Hebron, Conn.), who tossed a complete game five-hitter. Sophomore Haley Chandler (Wakefield, Mass.) and senior Stephanie Lavado (Wallingford, Conn.) each knocked in two runs in the Owls' 8-2 second game victory.

Winners of five of its last six games, Keene State (20-11-1, 7-3 LEC) registers its 13th consecutive 20-plus win season since joining Division III in 1998.

The Warriors (22-4-1, 9-1 LEC), who came into the twinbill ranked #19 nationally and second in New England, suffered their first LEC loss of the season.

Rathbun was the story in the first game. She struck out 12 and issued two walks to improve her season record to 16-1. She also helped herself offensively by hitting a two-run home run in the fourth inning. The Warriors added an insurance run in the seventh on an RBI single by sophomore Priscilla Alicea (Stratford, Conn.).

Lavado, who had three of the Owls five hits in the game, twice hit the top of the fence with long drives to the outfield. Both times she had to settle for doubles. Haley Chandler had the other two hits for KSC.

Sophomore Courtney Savoie (Stratham, N.H.) took the loss (8-3) for KSC. She pitched four innings, giving up two runs on three hits with three strikeouts and one walk.

Keene State had better luck against Warrior starter Rosie Manzo (Hudson, Mass.) in the second game. The Owls scored two runs in the first on RBI doubles from junior Katie Bradford (Lebanon, N.H.) and Lavado.

In the third, Chandler hit her fourth home run in two days, a solo shot to left, and Lavado also had an RBI single up the middle to give KSC a 4-0 lead.

Eastern scored its only runs of the game in the fourth on a two-run single by senior Katie O'Toole (Waterbury, Conn.).

Freshman Jessica Fiorenza (Wakefield, Mass.) had an RBI double in a two-run fourth inning for the Owls.

Chandler added three more hits in the second game and finished the doubleheader going five-for-eight. Lavado had two more hits. She was five-for-six in the two games. Sophomore Laura Chandler (Wakefield, Mass.) and Bradford also had a couple of hits for KSC.

Senior Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull, Conn.) had two of the Warriors' seven hits in the nightcap.

Sophomore Emily Albin (Bethel, Conn.) pitched into the fourth inning for the Owls, before giving way to sophomore Sara Stocklinski (Newton, N.H.), who picked up the win (3-2). Stocklinski gave up three hits while fanning two and walking two in her 1.2 innings in the circle.

Manzo (0-1), the first of four Warrior pitches, took the loss.

Keene State is at UMass-Boston on Tuesday for an LEC doubleheader.

Saturday, April 24, 2010

EASTERN SOFTBALL SWEEPS, REMAINS PERFECT IN LITTLE EAST
Against USM, Rathbun wins both ends of doubleheader for third time, ties strikeout record

GORHAM, Maine - The Eastern Connecticut State University fastpitch softball team extended three streaks Saturday following an 8-3, 6-5 Little East Conference doubleheader sweep of the University of Southern Maine at Towers Field on the USM campus.

Ranked 19th nationally and second in New England, Eastern (21-3-1, 8-0 little east) remained the only undefeated team in the Little East Conference by winning its eighth straight, extended its overall unbeaten streak this year to 11 (10-0-1) and stretched its winning streak in one-run games this year to five.

Sophomore All-America pitcher **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** won her 30th and 31st career games in 46 appearances winning both ends of a doubleheader for the third time this season. Rathbun (16-1), who has won the team's last five decisions, pitched a complete-game three-hitter in the first game - strikeout out the first six batters she faced -- and tying the program record of 16 strikeouts set 33 years ago by Cindy Chodkowski in the ninth game in program history (Rathbun had twice previously fanned 15 in a game). She struck out four without giving up a hit over the final two innings of the nightcap and gained the win after the Warriors tied the game in the fifth and won it in the seventh.

Eastern tied the second game in the fifth on Rathbun's leadoff home run - her team-leading fourth of 2010 - and scored the go-ahead run in the seventh on freshman third baseman **Arielle Cooper's (Mystic)** two-out RBI double.

Eastern has now won at least 20 games five straight seasons and for the sixth time in the last seven years under ninth-year head coach **Diana Pepin**.

In the doubleheader, Rathbun gave up only three hits and three runs in nine innings with 20 strikeouts and two walks. Sophomore **Kassondra Silva (Hamden)** had five hits and two RBI, sophomore rightfielder **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** four hits, three RBI and three runs scored and Cooper, senior centerfielder **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)**, Rathbun and senior shortstop **Kim Church (Farmington)** three hits each. Alicea also hit her first home run of the season - a three-run shot that gave the Warriors a 4-0 lead in the second inning of the nightcap. Four of Eastern's second-game runs were unearned.

Now 13-1-1 up north, the Warriors lashed 15 hits in the opener - 14 of them singles -- against complete-game loser Sarah Deroche (4-10), who also walked five without a strikeout. Silva and Sullivan each collected three hits, Church and Alicea two each. Church scored two runs and Silva drove in two.

In less than two years, Rathbun is already ranked third all-time at Eastern with 357 strikeouts, trailing only Christia Mohan (429) and Lindsay Savelle (409).

Eastern plays Keene State College in an LEC makeup doubleheader Sunday at 10 a.m. (time change from 1 p.m. due to expected rain). Keene retained a share of second place in the conference (two games behind Eastern) with defending champion Rhode Island College by sweeping visiting UMass Dartmouth 7-1 and 10-0 (in five innings) Saturday.

Molta, Bob (Athletics)

From: Christina Cracolici [ccracolici@usm.maine.edu]
Sent: Saturday, April 24, 2010 7:21 PM
To: Chris Brockman; chansc@midmaine.com; ssolloway@pressherald.com; Adam Levin; sports@wagmtv.com; joseph.pierce@maine.edu; jmenendez@pressherald.com; desk@ncaasports.com; pwarner@bangordailynews.net; sports@sunjournal.com; Local Media; Robert Caswell; ffj@mainemediaresources.com; rlenzi@pressherald.com; sports@globe.com; nkarkos@wmtw.com; radionews@mpbc.org; lakes@pressherald.com; KalleOakes.editor@mainsports.com; ssherlock@sunjournal.com; mlowe@pressherald.com; ewicklund@journaltribune.com; nqkarkos@yahoo.com; pbetit@pressherald.com; kthomas@pressherald.com; jbaltes@pressherald.com; rwelch@wmtw.com; gregjordan4@juno.com; Bruce.Glasier@wssh6.com; radiojimward@yahoo.com; adam.pellerin; bwatson@spurwink.org; sportseditor@maine.rr.com; cbetit@pressherald.com; baube@pressherald.com; wwalsh@pressherald.com; deid@wgme.sbgnet.com; Lee.Goldberg@wssh6.com; ddinsmore@pressherald.com; phsports@pressherald.com; GAlmasi@timesrecord.com; sports@bostonherald.com; cmnsports@centralmaine.com; donaldshields@clearchannel.com; pressreleases@cstv.com; bdnsports@bangordailynews.net; Travis Lee; gtimes@maine.rr.com; lbeals@journaltribune.com
Cc: B.L. Elfring; Jack Holleran; Molta, Bob (Athletics)
Subject: USM Softball: Eastern Connecticut 8, Southern Maine 3 and Eastern Connecticut 6, Southern Maine 5
Attachments: 4.24.10 SB ECONN.doc; ATT8030503.htm

For more information contact Christina Cracolici

Assistant Director for Athletic Media Relations

Saturday, April 24, 2010

For Immediate Release

College Softball

Eastern Connecticut Rallies For Seventh Inning Run to Preserve LEC Sweep Over Southern Maine 8-3, 6-5

GORHAM, Maine – Sophomore P Molly Rathbun (Hebron, Conn./RHAM) picked up two wins in the circle, improving her record to 15-1 on the season, to lead the Eastern Connecticut State University Warriors to a Little East Conference softball doubleheader sweep over the University of Southern Maine Huskies Saturday afternoon at Towers Field in Gorham, Maine. The Warriors defeated Southern Maine 8-3 in the opener and scored the go-ahead run in the top of the seventh inning to take a 6-5 come-from-behind victory in the nightcap.

Earning its fifth straight win, Eastern Connecticut improves to 20-3-1 overall and remains undefeated in the Little East Conference at 7-0. The Huskies, suffering their fourth straight loss, drop to 8-26 overall and 4-6 in the conference.

Rathbun was outstanding in the opener striking out 16 batters and limiting the Huskies to just three hits in seven innings. Dominant from the opening pitch, Rathbun struck out the first six USM batters she faced, while her teammates opened up a 5-0 lead through the top of the third inning.

Eastern Connecticut scored two runs in the top of the second on three hits. Senior SS Kin Church (Farmington, Conn.) scored her team's first run of the game on a wild pitch after reaching base safely with a single to center field and sophomore 3B Christine Yeomans (Durham, Conn./Coginchaugh Regional) drove in the second run with a single through the left side.

The Warriors added three more in the top of the third, including a two-run single from sophomore DH Kassondra Silva (Hamden, Conn.) and a run-scoring single from freshman 2B Kelly Paterson (Southington, Conn.).

USM rallied for three runs in the bottom of the inning, collecting three of its hits. Junior SS **Heather Gilman** (Fairfield, Maine/Lawrence) collected the first USM hit of the game stroking a double against the left field line and sophomore DH **Laura Leger** (Quincy, Mass./Fontbonne Academy) drew reached on a wild pitch. Both Gilman and Leger came around to score on a two-run single to center field by freshman 3B **Katie Davis** (Woburn, Mass.). Sophomore 2B **Cerise Humphrey** (Fryeburg, Maine/Fryeburg Academy) drew a walk in her at bat and came around to score later in the inning on a RBI single from sophomore C **Jess Hayden** (Madison, Maine).

After the third inning, Rathbun settled back in and cruised to the victory. Rathbun collected nine more strikeouts over the final four innings and did not allow a Husky past second base.

USM junior **Sarah Deroche** (Portland, Maine/Deering) took the loss yielding eight runs (seven earned) on 15 hits and five walks.

In the second game, the Huskies lead 5-4 after two innings following an RBI ground out from Humphrey and a three-run home run over the left field fence by sophomore OF **Lauren DiCecco** (South Berwick, Maine/Marshwood). DiCecco's second home run of the season chased Eastern Connecticut starter, freshman Christine Akcer (Milford, Conn./Jonathan Law) from the game. Akcer was replaced by Silva who pitched a solid 3.1 inning of relief allowing two hits and two walks.

Eastern Connecticut bounced back to knot the score up at five runs on a solo blast over the center field fence by Rathbun. After a scoreless top of the sixth, Southern Maine threatened in home half of the inning as Gilman and junior DH **Melissa Caiazzo** (Portland, Maine/Deering) tagged Silva

for back-to-back hits. Gilman led off with a double to right field and Caiazzo stroked a laser up the middle to set up runners on first and third with no outs.

Rathbun then came on in relief of Silva and quickly shut the door on any comeback thoughts by the Huskies. Rathbun fielded a squeeze bunt attempt by the Huskies at got the runner out at home and then retired the side with back-to-back strikeouts to maintain the 5-5 score.

In the seventh, Silva singled through the right side and came around to score on an RBI double to right field from freshman 3B Arielle Cooper (Mystic, Conn./Fitch Senior) for the 6-5 Warrior lead. Rathbun was again untouchable in the bottom of the seventh retiring three straight batters, including a pair of strikeouts.

Silva finished the doubleheader an outstanding 5-for-8 at the plate with two RBI. Rathbun was 3-for-8 with three RBI, while Priscilla Alicea (Stratford, Conn./Trumbull) was 4-for-8 with four runs scored and three RBI. Davis and DiCecco each drove in three runs to lead the Huskies.

Southern Maine hosts Plymouth State in a LEC doubleheader on Tuesday (3:30 p.m.). Eastern Connecticut hosts Keene State on Sunday (1:00 p.m.).

At Gorham, Maine

Eastern Connecticut (19-3-1, 6-0 LEC) 023 003 0 8-15-0

Southern Maine (8-25, 4-5 LEC) 003 000 0 3-3-1

Batteries: E, Molly Rathbun and Nikki Mustin

SM, Sarah Deroche and Jess Hayden

WP: E, Rathbun (14-1) LP: SM, Deroche (4-10)

2B: SM, Heather Gilman

3B: None

HR: None

RBI: E, Kassondra Silva 2, Ashley Sullivan, Katie O'Toole, Kelly Paterson, Christine Yeomans, Rathbun

SM, Katie Davis 2, Hayden

Repeat Hitters: E, Sullivan 3, Silva 3, Kim Church, Priscilla Alicea

Thursday, April 22, 2010

NO. 19 EASTERN SOFTBALL TAKES DOWN NO. 14 BRANDEIS, 3-2
Rathbun pitches, hits Warriors past Judges; second game cancelled due to darkness

WALTHAM, Mass. -- Behind sophomore All-America pitcher/DP **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)**, Eastern Connecticut State University won the battle of New England's top-rated and nationally-ranked teams, edging Brandeis University, 3-2, Thursday afternoon at Marcus Field. The second game was cancelled after four innings with the teams tied, 3-3 .

Rathbun (13-1) pitched a complete-game two-hitter with 13 strikeouts and only one walk and drove in all three runs with a two-run home run in the top of the first and an RBI single in the third. The home run was the team-leading third of the season for Rathbun , who has won ten straight pitching decisions this year and improved to 29-8 in her two-year career. She has 131 strikeouts and 23 walks this year and has fanned at least 11 batters in six of her 12 starts.

Eastern is ranked No. 1 in New England and No. 19 in Division III; Brandeis is No. 2 in New England and No. 14 nationally. The Warriors are 8-0-1 in their last nine games and Brandeis was 15-1-1 in its previous 17. It was the first meeting ever between the programs.

Rathbun outdueled Brandeis junior ace Emily Vaillette (12-4), who scattered six hits and walked two in the route-going performance. Vaillette walked Eastern sophomore rightfielder **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** to open the game. Alicea was sacrificed to second by senior centerfielder **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)** and Rathbun knocked in her team-leading 20th and 21st runs of the game with her two-run shot. In the third, Sullivan extended her hitting streak to six games with a with a one-out, opposite field double to right and Rathbun singled her in to make it 3-0.

Facing a team with a .344 batting average, Rathbun retired 16 in a row after issuing a leadoff walk – getting the first six outs via strikeout – before the Judges broke up her no-hit bid with a one-out single in the sixth and a two-run home run by leadoff hitter Melisa Cagar. Rathbun got successive ground balls to end the sixth and closed out with a 1-2-3 seventh that included two punchouts. Brandeis' top three hitters this season – each batting .380 or higher – were 0-for-9 and struck out five times.

In the second game which was eventually cancelled, Eastern scored three times in the top of the first but Brandeis bounced back to tie the game in the bottom of the second by scoring three unearned against sophomore righty **Kassondra Silva (Hamden)** on two hits and two Eastern errors. Eastern knocked out Brandeis senior righty Allie Mussen in the first by scoring three times – the third run being driven in by senior shortstop **Kim Church's (Farmington)** RBI double – but left the bases loaded.

Eastern visits the University of Southern Maine Saturday for a 1 p.m. Little East Conference doubleheader.

Tuesday, April 20, 2010

SOFTBALL: EASTERN SWEEPS WESTERN

DANBURY, Conn. – Sophomore All-America pitcher Molly Rathbun (Hebron) pitched a complete-game five-hitter in the opener and was credited with the second-game win in relief when the Eastern Connecticut State University softball team scored the final five runs for a come-from-behind win as the Warriors swept Western Connecticut State University, 4-1, 5-4, Tuesday night at Westside Field.

Ranked first in New England, Eastern (18-3-1, 6-0 little east) has won its first six conference games for the first time since 1998, when it swept Western (12-13, 2-4 little east). That sweep of Western 12 years ago was Eastern's last sweep of the Colonials. In each of the previous two years, the Warriors split with Western after winning their first four conference games.

Rathbun (12-1) fanned nine and walked one in the first game, scattering five hits. Rathbun carried a 4-0 lead into the sixth before the Colonials ruined the shutout bid on Anna Levesque's two-out RBI double. All-region senior centerfielder Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull) drove in three of Eastern's runs with a two-out triple in the fourth, and Rathbun plated the other. Sullivan doubled and scored to give Eastern a 1-0 lead in the first and walked in the third before giving the Warriors a 4-0 lead with her triple in the fourth which scored sophomore Kassondra Silva (Hamden) and senior catcher Nikki Musin (Griswold).

Silva's stellar relief in Game 2 helped the Warriors erase a 4-0 lead by scoring twice in the fourth and twice in the fifth and winning the game in the bottom of the seventh on a leadoff single by Sullivan and three walks. Sullivan had singled to open the inning and Western reliever Kara Cullinane walked senior DH Katie O'Toole (Waterbury), freshman second baseman Kelly Paterson (Southington), and freshman third baseman Arielle Cooper (Mystic), Sullivan scoring the game-ending run with one out.

Silva spelled freshman starter Christine Akcer (Milford) with two out in the second and gave up only one hit (fanning four and walking four) before Rathbun pitched a scoreless seventh, leaving the go-ahead run on second.

Eastern cut Western's early 4-0 lead in half with two runs in the fourth on Paterson's two-run double and tied the game in the fifth on a two-out, two-run single by senior shortstop Kim Church (Farmington).

Eastern visits Brandeis University Thursday for a 3:30 p.m. doubleheader in the first meeting ever between the programs. The Warriors are ranked 16th nationally, Brandeis 20th.

Tuesday, April 20, 2010

EASTERN SOFTBALL SWEEPS, STAYS UNBEATEN IN LEC
Warriors rally from four runs down against Western to capture nightcap

DANBURY, Conn. – Sophomore All-America pitcher **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** pitched a complete-game five-hitter in the opener and was credited with the second-game win in relief when the Eastern Connecticut State University softball team scored the final five runs for a come-from-behind win as the Warriors swept Western Connecticut State University, 4-1, 5-4, Tuesday night at Westside Field.

Ranked first in New England, Eastern (18-3-1, 6-0 little east) has won its first six conference games for the first time since 1998, when it swept Western (12-13, 2-4 little east). That sweep of Western 12 years ago was Eastern's last sweep of the Colonials. In each of the previous two years, the Warriors split with Western after winning their first four conference games.

Rathbun (12-1) fanned nine and walked one in the first game, scattering five hits. Rathbun carried a 4-0 lead into the sixth before the Colonials ruined the shutout bid on Anna Levesque's two-out RBI double. All-region senior centerfielder **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)** drove in three of Eastern's runs with a two-out triple in the fourth, and Rathbun plated the other. Sullivan doubled and scored to give Eastern a 1-0 lead in the first and walked in the third before giving the Warriors a 4-0 lead with her triple in the fourth which scored sophomore **Kassandra Silva (Hamden)** and senior catcher **Nikki Musin (Griswold)**.

Silva's stellar relief in Game 2 helped the Warriors erase a 4-0 lead by scoring twice in the fourth and twice in the fifth and winning the game in the bottom of the seventh on a leadoff single by Sullivan and three walks. Sullivan had singled to open the inning and Western reliever Kara Cullinane walked senior DH **Katie O'Toole (Waterbury)**, freshman second baseman **Kelly Paterson (Southington)**, and freshman third baseman **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)**, Sullivan scoring the game-ending run with one out.

Silva spelled freshman starter **Christine Akcer (Milford)** with two out in the second and gave up only one hit (fanning four and walking four) before Rathbun pitched a scoreless seventh, leaving the go-ahead run on second.

Eastern cut Western's early 4-0 lead in half with two runs in the fourth on Paterson's two-run double and tied the game in the fifth on a two-out, two-run single by senior shortstop Kim Church (Farmington).

Eastern visits Brandeis University Thursday for a 3:30 p.m. doubleheader in the first meeting ever between the programs. The Warriors are ranked 16th nationally, Brandeis 20th.

Thursday, April 15, 2010

NO. 1-RANKED EASTERN SOFTBALL GAINS WIN, TIE AT WESLEYAN
Warriors score four unearned runs in opening win; Cards rally in nightcap for tie

MIDDLETOWN, Conn. – All four of the runs scored by the Eastern Connecticut State University softball team in the 4-1 first-game win were unearned and Wesleyan University rallied for single runs in the sixth and seventh innings of the nightcap to gain a 2-2 tie in a game stopped after seven innings due to darkness.

Sophomore All-America pitcher **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** won her tenth game of the year against a loss with a five-hitter in the opener. She fanned seven and walked two. Trailing 4-0, Wesleyan scored its run on a solo home run with two out in the fourth by Sam Epstein. It was only the third home run allowed by Rathbun in her career.

Senior centerfielder **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)** and sophomore DP **Kassondra Silva (Hamden)** each had two hits and drove in a run in the first game for Eastern (16-3-1), ranked No. 1 in New England and No. 16 nationally. Rathbun had a 14-game hitting streak stopped when she went hitless in four at-bats. When the Warriors were scoring two runs in the second inning, she lined out to short to end the inning.

In the second game, Wesleyan (15-10-1) scored once in the sixth and one in the seventh to tie the game, which was called due to darkness after seven innings. Chrissy Bello tied the game with a one out RBI single to left in the seventh, which drove in Meaghan Dendy. Dendy had singled to open the inning and was sacrificed to second by Tori Redding. Eastern took a 2-0 lead in the fifth when it collected three of its seven hits in the game. Sullivan had an RBI double and scored on Kim Church's two-out single.

Eastern freshman **Christine Akcer (Milford)** carried a 2-0 lead into the sixth inning of the nightcap, but put the first two batters aboard with a walk and hit-by-pitch and a ground ball off sophomore reliever **Rosie Manzo (Hudson, MA)** brought home the first run. Manzo stranded the tying run at third with an inning-ending ground ball, but the Cardinals forged the tie in their final at-bat.

With the win and tie, Eastern extended its unbeaten streak to six.

Eastern visits Keene State College Saturday at 1 p.m. in a Little East Conference doubleheader.

Sunday, April 11, 2010

EASTERN SOFTBALL SWEEPS PLYMOUTH STATE, 13-0, 9-0
No. 13-ranked Warriors now only unbeaten team in Little East Conference

STORRS, Conn. – Junior DP **Rachel Soychak (Mahopac, NY)** drove in five runs with a three-run home run and a two-run pinch single and the Eastern Connecticut State University softball team collected 19 hits in eight at-bats in sweeping a Little East Conference doubleheader from Plymouth State University, 13-0, 9-0 Sunday at the University of Connecticut softball field. Both games were stopped after five innings on account of the eight-run rule.

Ranked No. 1 in New England and No. 13 nationally, Eastern (15-3, 4-0 little east) is the only unbeaten team in the Little East Conference after previously unbeaten Keene State College split a Saturday doubleheader with Rhode Island College. Plymouth (6-11, 2-2) had a five-game winning streak stopped in losing to Eastern for the seventh and eighth consecutive times.

Six Eastern batters had at least two hits, seven scored at least two runs and four drove in three or more runs to back the complete-game, three-hit shutout pitching of first-game sophomore starter **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** and second-game freshman **Christine Akcer (Milford)**. Rathbun (8-1) fanned eight (six in a row) without a walk and Akcer (5-2) struck out three and walked one.

Soychak had two hits, drove in five runs and scored one; rightfielder **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** had four hits (three doubles), scored three runs and drove in three runs; first baseman **Katie O'Toole (Waterbury)** had four hits, drove in four runs with a double and two singles, and scored twice; Rathbun had three hits, three RBI and two runs scored, recording a hit in each game to extend her hitting streak to 14; and third baseman **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)** had three hits – including her first career home run with a leadoff linedrive shot to left in the second inning of the first game. She scored three runs.

Left-handed hitting senior first baseman Kay LaBrie (Somersworth, NH) had two of Plymouth's six hits when she legged out infield hits in the second game.

Eastern visits Wesleyan University Thursday at 3:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 6, 2010

EASTERN SOFTBALL OVERCOMES EARLY DEFICIT, SWEEPS SC
Down by five runs in first inning, Warriors rally for eight unanswered runs

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. –Sophomore **Rosie Manzo (Hudson, MA)** had a two-out, two-run single to spark a four-run second inning that helped the Eastern Connecticut State University softball team climb out of an early five-run hole and post an 8-7 victory over Springfield College Tuesday afternoon and complete a sweep at Potter Field.

Trailing 5-0 after the first inning of the second game, Eastern (13-3) scored eight unanswered runs over the span of three innings on eight hits and five Springfield (11-12) errors which paved the way for five unearned runs. The Warriors are ranked No. 1 in New England and No. 14 nationally.

Sophomore **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** pitched a two-hitter with 13 strikeouts in the first game and drove in two insurance runs in a three-run eighth inning with a two-out double after sophomore **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** plated the first run of the game with a single. Rathburn got two swinging strikeouts and an outfield foul out in the bottom of the eighth to preserve the win. Alicea had three of Eastern's six hits.

In the first inning of the first game, Springfield got consecutive two-run doubles and was aided by three walks and an error to build a quick 5-0 lead, but Eastern answered with four runs of its own in the top of the second inning on four hits, two errors and a wild pitch, tied the game in the top of the third with a run on two hits and another error, and surged ahead with three runs in the fourth on two hits, a walk and two more errors.

Batting ninth, Manzo delivered a two-run, two-out single in the Warriors' four-run second inning and opened the three-run fourth inning with a walk and later scored the go-ahead run to give Eastern a 6-5 lead.

Rathbun (8-1) fanned 19 in 11 2/3 innings in gaining a complete-game shutout win in the first game, and her first save of the season in the second.

(more)

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Rathbun and seniors **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)** and **Katie O'Toole (Waterbury)** all had two hits for Eastern in the second game. Freshman **Christine Akcer (Mifflord)** gained her fourth win in six decisions as the second of three Eastern pitches, Rathbun gained the save by striking out six without a walk over the final 3 2/3 innings.

In the doubleheader, Alicia had four hits, senior **Kim Church (Farmington)** three hits and two runs scored and Rathbun three hits (two doubles) and three RBI. Rathbun lowered her ERA to 0.33 and upped her team-leading batting average to .465. Alicia is batting .458 and Church .333.

Eastern hosts Plymouth State University in a Little East Conference doubleheader beginning at 1 p.m. at the University of Connecticut.

Game 1

Eastern Conn. 3, Springfield College 0, 8 inn.

Eastern Conn. (12-3)	000	000	03	--	3	6	0
Springfield (11-11)	000	000	00	--	0	2	1

Molly Rathbun (8-1) and Nikki Mustin. Katie Anderson (2-2) and Michelle Wlosek. 2B-Rathun.

Game 2

Eastern Conn. 8, Springfield College 7

Eastern Conn. (13-3)	041	300	0	--	8	9	2
Springfield (11-12)	500	200	0	--	7	10	5

Kassondra Silva, Christine Akcer (1), Molly Rathbun (4) and Nikki Mustin. Stef Grande (4-8), Megan Fitzgerald (4) and Michelle Wlosek. Win-Akcer (4-2). Save-Rathbun (1). 2B-Rathbun (E), Bryn WorriLOW, Liz Milly (S).

Monday, April 5, 2010

EASTERN, COAST GUARD SOFTBALL SPLIT DOUBLEHEADER
In battle of top teams, Warriors win opener behind Rathbun's one-hitter

NEW LONDON, Conn. – Sophomore **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** had a one-out RBI single in the top of the eighth inning and sophomore **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** pitched a one-hitter with 14 strikeouts as the Eastern Connecticut State University softball team edged the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, 3-2, in the first game on the way to a split of Monday's doubleheader at Nitchman Field.

In the second game, Coast Guard (17-5) scored three times in the fourth inning on three hits, a walk and an infield error on the way to a 4-2 victory.

Eastern (11-5) entered play rated No. 1 in New England and No. 14 nationally. Coast Guard is ranked third in New England. The second-game loss snapped a five-game Eastern winning streak.

Eastern broke a 2-2 tie in the eighth inning of the first game with what proved to be the game-winning run. With the international tie-breaker rule in use -- which places a runner on second base to start the inning -- sophomore **Rosie Manzo (Hudson, MA)** bunted freshman **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)** to third, and Alicea ripped a single through the right side to plate Cooper easily from third. In the bottom of the eighth, Eastern cut the tying run down at the plate when Rathbun fielded a bunt and nailed pinch runner Summer Dupler on a throw to senior catcher **Nikki Mustin (Canterbury)** for the second out. Dupler had moved from second to third on a sacrifice bunt by freshman Stacia Sarwinski before No. 9 hitter Megan Cook attempted to squeeze in the tying run.

Rathbun (7-1) pitched her third straight one-hitter and fourth in the last five starts in the opener for Eastern and hit a solo home run to give Eastern (11-3) a 2-0 lead in the fourth inning Rathbun had a no-hitter for 5 2/3 innings before the Bears broke through for their only hit and both runs in the sixth. After Rathbun walked Sarwinski and sophomore Maddie Buchert, junior Amanda Frederick stroked a two-run double to right-center to tie the game.

In the second game, Coast Guard loaded the bases in the fourth inning of a scoreless game on singles by freshman Holli Bastinck and senior Carin Sweeney and a walk to sophomore Jamie Kim. With sophomore **Kassondra Silva (Hamden)** on in relief of freshman starter **Christine Akcer (Milford)**, Sarwinski bounced an infield ground ball to the left side that was booted, allowing the first two runs of the game to score. Kim later scored on an RBI single by Buchert.

(more)

Eastern got two unearned runs back in the fifth on three opening hits, a walk and error but the Bears escaped further damage by turning a sacrifice fly into an inning-ending double play. Leading by one, Coast Guard scored again to make it 4-2 in the fifth on an two-out RBI single by Sweeney. The Warriors cut down another potential pad run at the plate in the sixth when sophomore second baseman **Christine Yeomans (Durham)** erased pinch runner Anna Funk trying to score from third, but sophomore winning pitcher Hayley Feindel (15-5) retired Eastern in order in the seventh.

Averaging 3.8 hits allowed per seven innings this year, Feindel allowed seven in each game to Eastern, but fanned 11 in the complete-game opening loss and seven more in the victory.

Rathbun had two hits in each game for Eastern to improve her season average to .457. Alicea had two hits in the first game and Silva and senior Katie O'Toole (Waterbury) ad two each in the second game. Sweeney had three of Coast Guard's nine hits in the nightcap and Frederick added two, including a double.

Eastern visits Springfield College Tuesday for a 3:30 p.m. doubleheader.

**College Softball
at New London, Conn.**

**Game 1
Eastern Conn. 3, U.S. Coast Guard Academy 2**

Eastern Conn. (11-2)	001	100	01	--	3	7	0
U.S. Coast Guard (16-5)	000	002	00	--	2	1	1

Molly Rathbun (7-1) and Nikki Mustin. Hayley Feindel (14-5) and Amanda Frederick. 2B-Arielle Cooper (E), Frederick (C); 3B-Priscilla Alicea (E), HR-Rathbun (2).

**Game 2
U.S. Coast Guard Academy 4, Eastern Conn. 2**

Eastern Conn. (11-3)	000	020	0	--	2	7	1
U.S. Coast Guard (17-5)	000	310	x	--	4	9	1

Christine Akcer (3-2), Kassondra Silva (4) and Nikki Mustin. Hayley Feindel (15-5) and Amanda Frederick. 2B-Frederick (C).

Saturday, April 3, 2010

BOSTON – Whether Molly Rathbun’s (Hebron) right arm or right-handed swing is more potent became a point of discussion Saturday afternoon, when the sophomore All-America utility player pitched and hit the Eastern Connecticut State University softball team to a 9-0, 8-3 sweep of the University of Massachusetts Boston in the Little East Conference openers for both teams Saturday at the Clark Athletic Center.

Rathbun pitched a complete-game (five innings) one-hitter in the opener for her fifth win of the year and drove in two runs with two hits, then pitched 2 2/3 scoreless innings of relief for her sixth victory in the nightcap, and hit a seventh-inning grand slam home run as the No. 14 nationally-ranked Warriors won twice in their northern and conference debut.

In the opener, Rathbun lost a no-hit bid on a bunt single for the second time this year and finished with her eighth one-hitter in 27 career stats. She fanned seven and walked three. Rathbun, senior centerfielder Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull) and junior DP Rachel Soychak (Mahopac, NY) all had two hits and two RBI in the opening win. Soychak and senior first baseman Katie O'Toole (Waterbury) each had two-run doubles.

A freshly-minted No. 1 ranking in New England didn't jinx the Warriors Saturday, but there were some anxious moments in the second game when Eastern was forced to rally from a 2-0 deficit after three innings. Eastern tied the game with two unearned runs in the fourth when the hosts committed two of their five errors, then scored five runs in the top of the seventh to break a 3-3 tie. O'Toole's RBI snapped the 3-3 tie before Rathbun unloaded a two-out grand slam – her first HR of 2010 and fifth of her career -- to make it 8-3. Rathbun fanned five and walked one as the third of three pitchers in the game, and senior shortstop Kim Church (Farmington) was 3-for-3 and scored the go-ahead run in the seventh after a leadoff double.

Freshman righty Christine Akcer (Milford) was lifted in the third inning of the second game after surrendering hits to three of the four batters she faced. First-year sophomore transfer Kassondra Silva (Hamden) stranded two runners as the Warriors escaped further damage in the third, and was replaced by Rathbun in the fifth while UMass was scoring a run to tie the game at 3-all. Rathbun got five of six outs via strikeout in the final two innings.

In the doubleheader, Rathbun was 4-for-6 with six RBI, and Church 4-for-6 with three runs. Sullivan and sophomore utility player Rosie Manzo (Hudson, MA) each had three hits. O'Toole drove in three runs and sophomore all-region outfielder Priscilla Alicea (Stratford) scored three runs as the leadoff hitter.

Through 12 games, Rathbun is 6-1 with a 0.16 ERA and 60 strikeouts in 43 2/3 innings. Offensively, she is batting .400 with a team-leading 11 RBI.

Eastern visits the U.S. Coast Guard Academy for a 3 p.m. doubleheader Monday. The Bears were ranked No. 21 nationally two weeks ago.

-30-

MANSFIELD, Conn. — **Chris Cannata's (Southington)** fourth hit of the game drove in the tying and winning runs with two out in the bottom of the ninth inning and lifted the Eastern Connecticut State University baseball team to a 7-6 Little East Conference victory over the University of Massachusetts Boston Saturday in the first game of a doubleheader and the Warriors went on to sweep the Beacons at the Eastern Baseball Stadium.

Two singles and an error loaded the bases for Eastern (12-4, 2-1 little east) in the bottom of the ninth, and with two out, Cannata drove a 2-2 pitch within two feet of a grand slam, the ball bouncing high off the left-center field wall and plating pinch runner **Drew Accomando (Monroe)** and **John Parke (Middlefield)** with the game-winning runs that kept righty **Will Musson (Wethersfield)** perfect (7-0) in two years of conference competition.

In the second game, **Melvin Castillo (Danbury)**, Parke and **Shane Kingsley (Beacon Falls)** combined for 12 hits, nine RBI and seven runs in a 10-6 victory that was the 1,300th in the career of 42nd-year-head coach **Bill Holowaty** (1,300-478-6).

In the second game, Castillo was 5-for-5 with four runs scored, Parke 4-for-4 with a double, grand slam home run, six RBI and three runs scored, and Kingsley 3-for-4 (he also reached on an error) with three RBI as the trio reached safely in all 13 of its at-bats.

In the opener, senior lefty **Mike Tingley (Rockville)** and redshirt freshman righty **Mike Buckley (Braintree, MA)** combined on a five-hitter, fanning four and walking seven. Tingley (1-1) worked the first five innings of the seven-inning contest.

In the doubleheader, Eastern collected 33 hits, six of them doubles and seven of them triples. Dewing and Bass each had five hits, with Castillo and Schult contributing four each and first-year junior infielder **Tyler Turgeon (Norwich)** and junior leftfielder **Rob Perry (Manchester)** three apiece. Schult and Dewing both doubled once and tripled twice and Bass doubled twice. Turgeon had a double and triple. Schult and Bass both scored four runs.

Eastern faces Carleton College Friday at noon ET at Chandler, AZ.

-30-

Thursday, March 25, 2010

EASTERN SOFTBALL CAPS SUCCESSFUL SPRING TRIP
Akcer, Rathbun recod complete-game victories on final day

CLERMONT, Fla. -- Sophomore **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** pitched her seventh one-hitter in 26 career starts en route to her 20th career win in the first game and freshman **Christine Akcer (Milford)** pitched her first complete game in the nightcap as the Eastern Connecticut State University fastpitch softball team wound up its spring trip with 4-0, 9-1 wins over Buffalo State College and Mount Mercy College Thursday at Legends Field.

Ranked No. 14 nationally, Eastern completed the trip with an 8-2 record, losing its second game on Saturday to the University of Rochester, 4-2, and a 2-0 eight-inning decision to DePauw University Wednesday.

Buffalo, which had defeated Eastern 9-2 a year ago at Clermont, managed only three baserunners against Rathbun. Rathbun walked leadoff batter Laken Pogorzelski in the first, surrendered a two-out single to left to Pogorzelski on a 3-2 pitch in the third, and walked Niki Rieman with two out in the seventh. Only one of the runners advanced into scoring position. After Pogorzelski's two-out single in the third, Rathbun retired 12 in a row (seven by strikeout) before issuing the two-out walk in the seventh.

Rathbun equalled her season-high with 12 strikeouts (her 11th career game of at least ten), setting down five different hitters on strikes twice.

Akcer (3-1) took a shutout into the seventh before Mount Mercy scored on an RBI triple with two outs by Sheena Canady. Akcer allowed eight hits with two strikeouts and did not walk a batter. The seventh-inning run allowed by Akcer snapped a scoreless streak of 18 innngs, which began after she gave up four runs in her first collegiate inning against Rochester.

In the two wins, Rathburn had four hits (three doubles) and four RBI. Sophomore rightfielder **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** was 4-for-7 with three runs scored and two RBI, freshman second baseman **Kelly Paterson (Southington)** two hits and two RBI and senior centerfielder **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)** two hits, two runs and an RBI.

Against Buffalo State, Rathbun had a two-run double in the sixth to give Eastern a 3-0 lead and her pinch runner scored on an RBI single by senior first baseman **Katie O'Toole (Waterbury)**.

Against Mount Mercy, Alicea and Rathburn both had three hits and drove in two runs. Alicea scored two. Alicea's two-run triple in the fourth highlighted a four-run inning and gave Eastern a 7-0 lead.

Rathbun completed the trip with a 4-1 record and 0.19 ERA n 36.0 innings, with 48 strikeouts and ten walks. She had two one-hitters,

falling two outs shy of recording only the second perfect game in program history against Bowdoin College Monday. Opponents batted .116 against her. Akcer was 3-1 with a 1.75 ERA in 20.0 innings.

The team's leadoff hitter, Alicea batted .483 (14-for-29) in Florida with a double and two triples and ten RBI and seven runs scored; Senior centerfielder Sullivan batted .346 (9-for-26) with a double, triple, nine runs and five RBI, and also collected her 100th career hit; Rathbun hit .333 (8-for-24) with three doubles and five RBI. Junior leftfielder **Katie Dinihanian (Stratford)** – the team's No. 9 hitter -- batted .400 but missed the final four games of the trip after pulling her right hamstring.

Defensively, senior catcher **Nikki Mustin (Canterbury)** anchored a strong defense which committed only six errors for a .969 fielding average. Mustin started all but one game behind the plate, handling 75 chances without an error. Sullivan recorded 17 putouts without an error. Following a 3-1 win over Washington & Jefferson College Monday, ninth-year head coach **Diana Pepin (176-144)** became the second-winningest coach in the program's 34-year history. Only program found and Hall of Fame head coach and current assistant **Clyde Washburne** has won more.

Eastern opens its northern schedule Tuesday at 3 p.m. with a doubleheader at Trinity College.

Wednesday, March 24, 2010

No. 14 EASTERN SOFTBALL SPLITS PAIR OF SHUTOUTS IN FLORIDA
Rathbun loses in eight innings against DePauw after carrying no-hitter into seventh

CLERMONT, Fla. – Sophomore All-America pitcher **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** has proven to be virtually unhittable through her first four starts of the season. Wednesday, she carried a no-hitter into the seventh inning for the second time in as many days. This time, she ended up with nothing to show for it.

In Wednesday's second game, DePauw University broke up the no-hit bid with three hits in the seventh, then ended Eastern's (6-2) five-game winning streak by pushing across two runs in the top of the eighth in a 2-0 victory over the Warriors.

Eastern, ranked No. 14 nationally on the heels of its 5-1 start in Tuesday's NFCA Division III rating, pounded the University of Wisconsin-Stout, 10-0, Wednesday morning in a game stopped after five innings due to the eight-run rule.

Rathbun (3-1) and DePauw (12-2) senior righty Megan Sultz were locked in a classic pitching duel throughout the entire game, each finishing with four-hitters and five strikeouts and neither giving up an earned run. Rathbun walked four and Sultz (11-2) walked two.

The Warriors had only a few chances to break the stalemate, but were erased on the bases each time. In the second, a runner was picked off second by DePauw freshman catcher Amy Hallett for the second out. In the fifth, senior shortstop **Kim Church (Farmington)** was tagged out by Hallett at the plate on a throw from leftfielder Rachel MacBeth to complete a double play. Hallett then picked off another Eastern runner – this time at third – to end Eastern's fifth-inning threat.

Utilizing the international tie-breaker rule which puts a runner on second beginning with the eighth inning, DePauw scored twice on two sacrifice bunts, an RBI double and an Eastern error. After the Tigers broke through on a run-producing sacrifice bunt by All-America third baseman Jen Kosinski, Hallett delivered an insurance run with a two-out double to left to make it 2-0, but a second runner was tagged out at the plate on a relay from sophomore leftfielder **Rosie Manzo (Hudson, MA)** to Church to senior catcher **Nikki Mustin (Canterbury)**.

In the bottom of the eighth, Eastern left the tying run on second base when Sultz induced a game-ending foul popup on a one-strike pitch. With sophomore **Christine Yeomans (Durham)** on second base to open the eighth, Sultz got a strikeout and fly ball to center for the first two outs of the eighth before sophomore rightfielder **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** advanced Yeomans to third and hustled into scoring position herself when the throw from the outfield went all the way to the plate. Sultz left the tying run at second, however, with the infield popup.

Rathbun lowered her season ERA to 0.24 in four starts.

Against Stout (7-8), the top five hitters in the Eastern lineup had seven hits, drove in nine runs and scored seven. Church had a two-run double in the first and a two-run triple in a seven-run fourth. Freshman righty **Christine Akcer (Milford)** and first-year sophomore righty **Kassondra Silva (Hamden)** combined on a three-hit shutout, fanning four and walking three. Since being touched for four earned runs in her first collegiate inning Saturday, Akcer has tossed 12 scoreless innings, allowing only eight hits with six strikeouts and three walks.

Senior centerfielder **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)** had two hits, including a triple, scored two runs and drove in run, while junior **Rachel Soychak (Mahopac, NY)** drove in her fourth and fifth hits of the season on her fifth hit with a pinch single to center in the fourth.

Junior leftfielder **Katie Dinihanian (Stratford)** missed her first start after pulling a hamstring in the fifth inning of Monday's 3-0 win over Bowdoin. She is expected to be out for at least two weeks.

Eastern winds up its ten-game spring trip Thursday against Buffalo State College at 9:30 a.m. and NAIA-affiliate Mount Mercy College at 11:30 a.m.

Monday, March 22, 2010

DEFENSE, PITCHING LIFT EASTERN SOFTBALL TO SWEEP
Against Bowdoin, Rathbun two outs shy of program's first perfect game in 25 years

CLERMONT, Fla. – Sophomore righty **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** settled for her sixth career one-hitter after falling two outs shy of pitching the program's first perfect game in 25 years to spark the Eastern Connecticut State University to two wins Monday at Legends Field at the National Training Center.

In the first meetings ever against Washington & Jefferson College and Bowdoin College, Eastern (5-1) committed only one error on 62 fielding chances and three pitchers surrendered only four hits as the Warriors won their third and fourth straight games.

Against Bowdoin (8-4) in the second game, Rathbun (3-0) retired the first 19 batters in order before sophomore leftfielder Caroline Dewar outran a slash/bunted ball to the left side of the infield to foil Rathbun's attempt at the second perfect game and 30th no-hitter in the program's 34-year history. The Warriors broke open a tight pitchers' duel with an unearned run in the sixth and two pad runs in the seventh in a 3-0 victory.

In the opening win Monday morning against Washington & Jefferson (3-4), sophomore righties **Rosie Manzo (Hudson, MA)** and **Kassondra Silva (Hamden)** combined on a three-hitter and senior centerfielder **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)** lashed her 100th career hit in a 3-1 victory. In her first appearance of the year, Manzo (1-0) evened her career record at 3-3 by stopping the Presidents on one fifth-inning hit over the first five innings before Silva was summoned to protect a 3-0 lead and record her first career save in an Eastern uniform.

Bowdoin put only three balls out of the infield against Rathbun, now 19-7 in 32 career appearances. Senior shortstop **Kim Church (Farmington)** and senior first baseman **Katie O'Toole (Waterbury)** came up with running catches on pop-ups in the second and sixth, respectively, to preserve Rathbun's perfect game through six innings. Rathbun dismissed leadoff hitter Kara Nilan on three pitches to open the seventh. The left-handed

hitting Dewar, who had grounded to Rathbun in each of her previous at-bats – attempting a bunt in the fourth – fell behind 0-2 to Rathbun before pushing the third pitch to the left side of the infield. The charging Church fielded the ball and threw cleanly from her shortstop position but Dewar beat the throw by two steps to spoil Rathbun's bid for a perfect game. Dewar moved to second on a wild pitch, but Rathbun completed the one-hitter by fanning both pinch hitter Molly Nestor and clean-up hitter Clare Ronan on 3-2 pitches.

Rathbun threw only 70 pitches – 53 for strikes – in disposing of the Polar Bears in a scant one hour and 23 minutes. The shutout was her second of the season and ninth in 24 career starts. It was her sixth one-hitter. In 21 innings this year, Rathbun has fanned 31 and walked only four with a 0.33 ERA. Opponents are batting .127.

Bowdoin senior righty Julia Jacobs (4-1) matched Rathbun pitch-for-pitch into the late innings before the Warriors broke through for an unearned run in the sixth and two more in the seventh. Sullivan reached on an outfield error with one out in the sixth and came home with the first run when Church dumped a two-out single into shallow center field. With one out in the seventh, O'Toole singled to center and Manzo – who had replaced injured junior leftfielder **Katie Dinihanian (Stratford)** in left two innings earlier – legged out a bunt. A wild pitch move both runners into scoring position for sophomore rightfielder **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)**, who delivered her sixth and seventh RBIs of the young season with an opposite-field double to left.

The only perfect game in program history was authored by righty Julie Bacher in a 3-0 win over Rowan University on the team's spring trip March 18, 1985 at Columbia, SC. She did not strike out a batter in that game. Righty Lindsay Savelle owns the program's 29th and most recent no-hitter, that coming on April 9, 2005 in a 1-0 Little East Conference victory at Plymouth State University. She faced only two batters over the minimum – both walks – in that game.

Against Washington & Jefferson, the Warriors scored single runs in the first three innings in support of Manzo, with junior catcher **Rachel Soychak (Mahopac, NY)** driving in two of the runs. With two out and none on in the first, Sullivan singled to left, stole second, and Soychak stroked an opposite-field single to right to make it 1-0. Eastern added an unearned run in the

second when freshman second baseman **Kelly Paterson (Southington)** scored from second on an infield error with one out. Freshman third baseman **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)** opened the third with a double to the base of the left field fence and Soychak sent her in with a single through the left side.

Sullivan collected the 100th hit of her four-year career with a one-out triple through the left side of the infield. She was left stranded when losing pitcher Georgia Schumacher retired the side on two infield ground balls.

In six games this year, leadoff hitter Alicea and No. 9 hitter Dinihanian are batting a combined .444 (11-for-25) with six runs scored and eight RBI. They have struck out only once. Four pitchers have a 1.33 ERA, with 45 strikeouts and 16 walks. Twenty four of the 27 hits allowed are singles. Led by O'Toole (24 chances at first base with no errors), the Warriors are fielding at .983 with only three errors.

Eastern returns to action Wednesday at Clermont, facing UW-Stout at 1:30 p.m. and DePauw University at 3:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 21, 2010

EASTERN SOFTBALL SWEEPS PAIR IN FLORIDA, 7-1 and 8-2
Rathbun wins All-America pitching duel in victory over No. 12 UW-Whitewater

CLERMONT, Fla. – Sophomore righty **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** outdueled University of Wisconsin-Whitewater junior lefty Jessica Stang in a matchup of All-America pitchers and the Eastern Connecticut State University softball team went on to two victories Sunday at the National Training Center.

In a game which began at 11:30 a.m. and ended close to 8 p.m., Rathbun struck out 11 and walked two and spaced five singles and sophomore rightfielder **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** delivered a bases-clearing triple in the top of the sixth following a six-hour rain delay as the Warriors dumped No. 12 nationally-ranked Whitewater (3-3), 7-1.

Facing Allegheny College (2-1) in a game which began 13 minutes after the completion of the Whitewater game, Alicea had three hits, scored three runs and drove in two and freshman righty **Christine Akcer (Milford)** recorded her first collegiate win with four solid relief innings in an 8-2 victory.

Whitewater, 38-7 a year ago, handed Eastern (3-1) six unearned runs by committing six infield errors. Eastern led 4-1 and had the bases loaded with one out in the sixth before heavy rain halted the contest. When it resumed six hours and 19 minutes later, Alicea stroked a 2-2 pitch for a bases-clearing triple that upped the lead to 7-1.

Given the six-run cushion, Rathbun made quick work of the Warhawks over the final two innings, fanning four, including the side in the seventh. The win over Whitewater was the second in as many career starts for Rathbun, who pitched a three-hit, complete-game shutout with 12 strikeouts in last year's 4-0 win here.

Rathbun was a second-team All-America as a freshman and Stang a first-teamer as a sophomore when she was 21-3. The left-handed Stang fanned 12 and matched Rathbun's five-hitter and allowed only one earned run, but was the victim of her own fielding inadequacies when she committed three errors.

In her second career appearance, Akcer picked up her first win in relief of first-year sophomore righty **Kassondra Silva (Hamden)**. Akcer pitched the final four innings without allowing a run. She gave up only one hit while fanning three without a walk.

Eastern scored the final six runs against Allegheny to break a 2-2 tie. Leading 3-2 on senior **Ashley Sullivan's (Trumbull)** third-inning sacrifice fly, the Warriors batted around in the fourth by scoring five runs on four hits. In her second career at-bat, freshman **Jamie Vallarelli (Vernon)** drove in two runs with a pinch double in the five-run fourth, Alicea plated two with a singled and freshman **Arielle Cooper (Groton)** drove in another with a triple.

Batting at the top of the order, Alicea and Cooper combined for five hits and three RBI against the Gators, with Alicea scoring three runs. In addition to her sacrifice fly, Sullivan drove in Alicea with a triple in the first, and came around to score on a wild pitch to make it 2-0.

Eastern's defense committed only one error on 54 chances on the afternoon and has only two errors in its first four games. Three pitchers fanned 16 and walked only five and had a 1.50 ERA.

On Tuesday, Eastern faces Washington & Jefferson College at 9:30 a.m. and Bowdoin College at 11:30 a.m.

Eastern Conn. 7, UW-Whitewater 1

Eastern Conn. (2-1)	200	104	0	-	7	5	1
UW-Whitewater (3-3)	100	000	0	--	1	5	6

Mollie Rathbun (2-0) and Nikki Mustin. Jessica Stang (2-1) and Emily Epifanio.

Eastern Conn. 8, Allegheny College 2

Allegheny (2-1)	020	000	0	--	2	6	1
Eastern Conn. (3-1)	201	500	x	--	8	9	0

Amanda Downey (1-1) and Felicia Gowanlock. Kassondra Silva, Christine Akcer (4) and Nikki Mustin. WP-Akcer (1-1). 2B-Jamie Vallarelli (E); 3B-Arielle Cooper (E).

Saturday, March 20, 2010

EASTERN SOFTBALL SPLITS SEASON-OPENING PAIR AT CLERMONT, FL
Rathbun sets down 12 Bates batters in 5-0 win; Rochester strikes quickly in 4-0 victory

CLERMONT, Fla. -- Sophomore righty **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** began her second softball season at Eastern Connecticut State University in the same way she opened her career -- with a complete-game victory.

Saturday, the second-team Division III All-America fanned 12 batters and spaced three hits to record her eighth shutout in 22 career starts in a 5-0 season-opening victory over Bates College at the National Training Center. Two of Bates' (1-4) hits never left the infield as Rathbun won her 17th career regular-season game in 20 decisions.

In the second game of the day, the University of Rochester (6-7) pushed across all of its runs in the top of the first inning, leaving Eastern (1-1) with a split on the opening day of the season.

Eastern 5, Bates College 0

Rathbun walked two in facing only five batters over the minimum, registering at least one strikeout in all nine spots in the Bates (1-4) order. Her strikeout total was just three shy of her personal record and moves her into a tie for fourth place all-time with 218 strikeouts in only 30 career appearances.

Seven different batters had one hit for Eastern, which scored twice in the first and fifth and once in the sixth. Three of the Warriors' runs were unearned. Senior centerfielder **Ashley Sullivan (Trumbull)**, first-year sophomore DP **Kassondra Silva (Hamden)** and freshman pinch hitter **Christine Akcer (Milford)** all drove in a run for the Warriors, coming off consecutive NCAA tournament appearances for the first time in 14 seasons.

Akcer's hit came in her first collegiate at-bat and drove in sophomore rightfielder **Rosie Manzo (Hudson, MA)** with the final run of the game. Batting leadoff, senior shortstop **Kim Church (Farmington)** reached safely three times, scored twice and stole a base.

Rochester 4, Eastern 2

Rochester sophomore righty Sara Hutchinson pitched a complete-game seven hitter in the Yellow Jackets' victory.

Eastern freshman righty **Christine Akcer (Milford)** recovered to pitch four scoreless innings after Rochester roughed her up in the bottom of the first inning on four hits and a walk. Juliana Nicholson and M.C. Wagner had consecutive two-run hits in the inning for Rochester

The Warriors had two chances for big innings but managed only one run in each. In the bottom of the first, Rochester committed two errors but Eastern left the bases loaded after scoring one run when Church came home from third on an infield error. In the fourth, the Warriors strung together three hits but a heads-up play by Hutchinson allowed the Yellow Jackets to escape with only one run scored. With runners on first and second, junior pinch hitter **Rachel Soychak (Mahopac, NY)** plated freshman third baseman **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)** from second with a single as freshman pinch runner **Courtney Weber (Groton)** headed to third. The throw from the outfield sailed over the head of catcher Nicholson, but Hutchinson was backing up the play. She retrieved it and gunned down Yeomans trying to take third base to end the inning.

Making her collegiate pitching debut Acker (0-1) gave up only four hits over the final four innings of her five-inning stint. The Warriors played perfect defense behind Acker and second pitcher Silva as they committed only one error in 14 innings on the afternoon.

Cooper reached safely three times. She had two hits and reached on an infield error.

Hutchinson (5-4) fanned eight and walked only one.

Sunday, Eastern plays UW-Whitewater at 11:30 a.m. and Allegheny College at 3:30 p.m.