

Monday, May 16, 2011

EASTERN SOFTBALL ADVANCES TO NATIONAL TOURNAMENT

In title game, Rathbun throws three-hitter, freshman Johnson drives in three runs in 4-1 win

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – Coming off a last-inning loss to Rhode Island College Sunday in the first game of the championship round of the 2011 NCAA Division III Providence, RI Softball Regional, Eastern Connecticut State University told itself that it had to ‘move on’ in the championship game Monday morning.

And because they were able, collectively, to do that, the Warriors will be ‘moving on’ to the national softball tournament for the second straight year and 13th time in program history.

Eastern opens play in the 30th Annual Division III national tournament Friday at 6:30 p.m. against Salisbury, Maryland Regional champion Christopher Newport University at the James I. Moyer Softball Complex in Salem, Va.

In Monday’s one-game, winner-take-all showdown with Little East Conference foe Rhode Island College at the Dayna A. Bazar Softball Complex on the RIC campus, junior All-America righty **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** won her 23rd game of the year in 24 decisions and freshman leftfielder **Stephanie Johnson (Southington)** knocked in three of the team’s runs with two singles and scored the team’s fourth as the Warriors rebounded from Sunday’s two-run loss to win their fourth tournament game in five days by a score of 4-1.

“After Sunday’s loss, we knew that we had to move on,” said Johnson, one of four freshman starters in the lineup, “and we felt confident going into the game (Monday).”

Batting sixth in the order in Sunday’s 3-1 loss to Rhode Island, Johnson was 0-for-2 with a strikeout against RIC senior ace Amanda Berard (18-7). Batting eighth in the order Monday, she collected half of the team’s six hits. Her second-inning single up the middle plate sophomore first baseman **Kelly Paterson (Southington)** – who had doubled with one out – to give Eastern an early lead. In the fifth, Johnson led off with an infield single to short and raced home on junior All-New England Region **Priscilla Alicea’s (Stratford)** ground ball to short.

With Rathbun holding Rhode Island (38-13) to one hit through five innings, the Warriors virtually sealed the win on Johnson’s two-out, two-run single – again a sharp ground ball through the middle -- in the sixth. Sophomore cleanup hitter **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)** and Paterson drew walks around a Berard strikeout and both move moved up on a sacrifice bunt by DP **Rachel Soychak (Mahopac, NY)** – the team’s only senior -- to set the stage for Johnson’s two-run single.

Rathbun fanned six and walked one in her complete-game, three-hit performance and also had two hits. The two-time All-America and conference Pitcher-of-the-Year, Rathbun set down the first 12 batters in order before walking Chelsi Panarelli to open the fifth.

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Trailing 2-0, the Anchorwomen ran themselves out of a chance to get back into the game in the fifth inning. With one out and Panarelli on second and Kristina Gingell (single) on first, Emily Johnson popped the ball up behind the second base bag. Freshman shortstop **Megan Godwin (Manchester)** was unable to grab the pop because she was shielded by Panarelli standing on the bag, as the ball fell to the ground. Godwin was unsure if the infield fly had been called by home plate umpire Ron Vargas (it had been, thus making the batter Johnson automatically out), so she fielded the ball and fired to Cooper third base in the hope of forcing Panarelli. Unsure if she had to head for third (which she did not) to avoid the force out, Panarelli was caught off second on Cooper's return throw to Godwin covering second to end the inning.

A one-out opposite field triple by No. 9 hitter Stacy Pokora – whose three-run, seventh-inning home run at lifted RIC to Sunday's 3-1 victory – and a suicide squeeze bunt by leadoff hitter Kayla Jandreau accounted for Rhode Island's run in the sixth inning.

Rathbun, Johnson, Cooper, Soychak and Godwin represented Eastern on the 15-person all-tournament team. In the tournament, Rathbun pitched all 34 innings with a 0.82 ERA, 45 strikeouts and seven walks, two shutouts, with an opponent batting average of .108 (she also batted .438 (7-for-16) with five runs and five RBI). Johnson batted .400 (6-for-15) with five RBI, Cooper .231 (3-for-13) with six runs and four RBI, a team-high eight assists and two putouts in the field; Soychak .167 (2-for-12) with three RBI and a run; and Godwin .333 (5-for-15) with four runs and an RBI, eight putouts and five assists in the field.

In six games (all played within a month) against RIC this year, Rathbun was 4-1 with a 0.91 ERA in 38 2/3 innings, 48 strikeouts and six walks and a .132 opponent batting average as the Warriors won five times. Godwin batted .353 in those games, freshman second baseman **Jen Tamindzija (Malden, MA)** .385, Paterson .350 with 35 putouts and an assist in 36 chances at first base, and Johnson and Alicea .350.

A first-round win in next weekend's nationals would move the Warriors into the winners' bracket of the eight-team, double-elimination tournament Saturday at 6:30 p.m. against the winner of Friday's 4 p.m. first-round game between Messiah College and DePauw University.

If it loses its first game, Eastern drops into an elimination game Saturday at 1:30 p.m. against the Messiah- DePauw loser. The Warriors split two games with Christopher Newport in last year's national tournament, losing an opening-round 8-0 decision without Rathbun (who contracted food poisoning the night before the start of the tournament) before later eliminating the Captains, 5-2. Eastern downed DePauw, 8-1 in a third-round game last year after losing to DePauw on the 2010 Florida trip.

In other first-round games Friday, Linfield College meets SUNY Cortland at 11 a.m., and Luther College faces the University of Texas-Tyler at 1:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 15, 2011

EASTERN PUSHED TO LIMIT IN NCAA SOFTBALL REGIONAL
Rhode Island College forces deciding game Monday with seventh inning home run

PROVIDENCE, R.I. -- Winning its first three games in the NCAA Division III Providence, R.I. Regional Tournament afforded the Eastern Connecticut State University some wiggle room heading into the championship series.

If Eastern (33-5) returns to the NCAA Division III national tournament later this week for the second straight season and 13th time overall since 1982, the Warriors will have to take full advantage of it.

Needing a victory to force a one game, winner-take-all showdown, fourth-seeded and host Rhode Island College (38-12) proved that the fifth time was the charm against Eastern with a dramatic 3-1 win Sunday afternoon at the Dayna A. Bazar Softball Complex on the RIC campus.

With just one hit and eight strikeouts in 13 previous plate appearances this season against junior All-America **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)**, freshman No. 9 hitter Stacy Pokora belted a three-run home run with one out in the top of the seventh inning to keep Rhode Island's hopes alive for a third national tournament appearance in the last five years.

The winner of Monday's 10 a.m. start will open Friday in the eight-team, double-elimination tournament at the James I. Moyer Complex in Salem, VA. Luther College (IA) and Christopher Newport University (VA) have already qualified, with the other six regionals expected to conclude either today or Monday.

The home run for Pokora – who had struck out in each of her two previous appearances in the game – was the third of her career and only the third allowed by Rathbun (22-1) in 167 innings this season. It was also the first by an RIC batter off Rathbun in five games this season, with the Warriors having compiled a 29-6 advantage in runs in four previous wins against their Little East Conference rival.

“Rhode Island's a great team,” noted Rathbun afterward. “We have a very, very tough conference, and this says something about our conference with two of our teams in the regional final. (But) we have the upper hand – they have to beat us twice. We'll be ready to go. We want to go out to (the nationals).”

Monday, Eastern and Rhode Island will be facing off for the sixth time in less than a month. Before Sunday, the Warriors had swept the regular-season conference series, 4-2, 7-3, in Providence, defeated the Anchorwomen in the final of the LEC tournament, 7-1, at Danbury, CT, and blanked RIC, 11-0, in the second round of the regionals on Friday behind Rathbun's sixth career no-hitter.

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Sunday, Rathbun allowed only two hits through the first six innings and had driven in junior rightfielder **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** from second with a single to right-center for the only run of the game.

With one out in the top of the seventh, however, Emily Johnson reached safely on an infield throwing error on a difficult ground ball in the 5-6 hole. Amanda Perry then moved the tying run into scoring position with an opposite-field single to right before Pokora drilled the go-ahead three-run home run over the left field fence.

In the bottom of seventh inning, senior righty Amanda Berard retired the Warriors in order for the first time in the game -- collecting her ninth and tenth strikeouts in the process -- for her first win over Eastern this year after two losses. Berard gave up only five hits while walking three in the complete-game victory.

The loss was only the second this year in 28 games for No. 9 nationally-ranked Eastern since returning from Florida.

Eastern couldn't capitalize on several scoring opportunities until finally breaking a scoreless duel with a run in the fifth. With one out, Alicea legged out a swinging bunt, advance into scoring position on a wild pitch, and scored standing up when Rathbun dumped a fly ball into right-center field.

Prior to the fifth, the Warriors stranded six baserunners in their quest to break through. Alicea doubled with one out in the first but was left at third when Berard got a ground ball and inning-ending strikeout. In the second, a walk and single by freshman second baseman **Jen Tamindzija (Malden, MA)** put two aboard with two out, but Bernard got an infield ground ball to escape. In the third, Bernard sandwiched two walks around a sacrifice bunt by Alicea, but a strikeout and comebacker quelled that threat. And in the fourth, sophomore first baseman **Kelly Paterson (Southington)** reached on an error with one out and was sacrificed to second by Tamindzija, but Berard sidestepped trouble with an inning-ending infield pop.

In five games this year against Rhode Island, Rathbun is 3-1 with a 0.88 ERA, 42 strikeouts and five walks in 31 2/3 innings and has a .450 batting average and team-leading seven RBI. Tamindzija is batting .500 in those games, freshman **Megan Godwin (Manchester)** .400 and Alicea .389. The Warriors are also fielding at .973, with only four errors.

Against Eastern this year, Rhode Island is batting .176 and fielding at .944, with its three pitchers showing a 3.22 ERA. Senior catcher Kayla Jandreau (.412) is the only player on the team batting better than .250 against Eastern.

Saturday, May 7, 2011

EASTERN SOFTBALL ROLLS THROUGH LEC TOURNAMENT

For second straight year, Warriors sweep to title; Rathbun tournament's top player

DANBURY, Conn. -- Junior All-America **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** won her eighth straight game in the last two years of Little East Conference softball tournament competition, leading Eastern Connecticut State University to its second straight title, and with it, its New England-record 18th NCAA tournament berth

Since losing both of the team's LEC tournament games as an injured freshman in 2009, Rathbun has defeated Plymouth State, Keene State, Western Connecticut and Rhode Island College in each of the past two years in the tournament. This year, Rathbun (19-0) tossed a four-hitter and Eastern (30-4) erased a 1-0 deficit by scoring six times in the fifth on three hits and two Rhode Island College (33-11) errors to defeat the former four-time defending LEC tournament champion Anchorwomen, 7-1, Saturday afternoon at Westside Field.

It marks the first time in 19 years that Eastern has put together consecutive 30-win seasons. Last year's team won 39 and lost 6 and won its first regional title and competed in its first NCAA national tournament since 1992.

Fourth-seeded Rhode Island had advanced to the final for the fifth time in six years -- finishing second for the first time -- by avenging an earlier 2-0 tournament loss to Western Connecticut (27-12) by eliminating the second-seeded Colonials, 3-0, in Saturday's first game.

Eastern catcher **Rachel Soychak (Mahopac, NY)** -- the team's only senior -- becomes the first Eastern player to compete in four straight NCAA tournaments in 17 years. The regional tournaments get underway Thursday -- with Rhode Island College's Dayna A. Bazar's Softball Facility serving as a regional host -- with the Warriors looking for a return trip to the NCAA Division III national tournament, where they placed third a year ago after winning the Wellesley, Massachusetts regional.

After surrendering the first run of the game Saturday in the first inning on two hits and a walk, Rathbun turned out the lights on the Anchorwomen. She faced only two batters over the minimum the rest of the way -- giving singles in the third and fifth -- while striking out eight in the game and retiring the final eight batters in order.

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Still trailing by a run, Eastern rallied for six runs (three unearned) in the top of the fifth on singles by freshman leftfielder **Stephanie Johnson (Southington)**, sophomore first baseman and No. 9 hitter **Kelly Paterson (Southington)**, and junior rightfielder **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)**, two infield errors, two wild pitches, a passed ball, and a sacrifice fly by freshman centerfielder **Courtney Jobin (Oxford, MA)**. Paterson drove in the first run of the inning, Alicea followed with her two-run single, and Rathbun made it 4-1 when she plated Alicea on an infield error.

In four complete-game victories in this year's tournament, Rathbun fanned 38 and walked two and allowed only 26 hits (three for extra bases) with a 1.25 ERA. She is 19-0 this year with 208 strikeouts and 19 walks and a 0.70 ERA. She also batted .417 (5-for-12) in the tournament en route to tournament Most Outstanding Player honors for the second straight year.

Johnson matched Rathbun with a team-leading .417 average in the tournament, with freshman shortstop **Megan Godwin (Manchester)**, sophomore third baseman **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)**, Paterson and Soychak all batting .333. Godwin had a double and home run and a team-leading five RBI, with Cooper homering twice and knocking in four runs in the tournament and Jobin plating four runs.

Eastern committed only three errors in the tournament, with Cooper collecting a team-high eight assists without an error.

Eastern is 23-1 since winning seven of ten in Florida. The Warriors had a 17-game winning streak ended 11 days ago in their only LEC loss, a 10-2 five-inning setback at Western Connecticut in the second game of a doubleheader.

Friday, May 6, 2011

EASTERN SOFTBALL ONE WIN AWAY FROM SECOND STRAIGHT LEC TITLE
In winners' bracket, Jobin drives in three runs and Rathbun tosses third tournament CG

DANBURY, Conn. – Freshman centerfielder **Courtney Jobin (Oxford, MA)** drove in three runs -- two coming on a single which gave the Eastern Connecticut State University softball team the lead for good – as the Warriors moved to within a game of their second straight Little East Conference tournament championship with a 5-3 win over Western Connecticut State University Friday evening at Westside Field.

Top-seeded Eastern (29-4) needs one win Saturday to successfully defend its conference championship from a year ago. Second-seeded Western (29-4) meets fourth-seeded Rhode Island College (32-10) Saturday at 11 a.m. in an elimination game. Eastern will have two chances to beat the winner of that game to win the title. The first game of the championship round is scheduled for 1 p.m., with the second game to follow.

Earlier in the day, Eastern eliminated third-seeded Keene State College (27-12-1), 7-2 for its second tournament win to remain in the winners' bracket. The Warriors had edged Keene, 1-0 in eight innings, in last year's championship game at Keene, NH.

With the score tied 1-1 against Western Friday, Eastern went ahead for good with a two-out rally. Jobin's single drove in senior DH **Rachel Soychak (Mahopac, NY)** and freshman leftfielder **Stephanie Johnson (Southington)**. Soychak had singled and moved to third on Johnson's single.

Junior All-America **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** pitched a complete-game eight-hitter for her 18th win this year without a loss. Rathbun struck out seven and walked one. She took a 5-1 lead into the seventh before Western scored twice on Danielle Basciano's double. Rathbun got a comebacker to retire the potential tying run and end the game.

Leading 3-1, Eastern opened up a four-run lead by scoring two unearned runs in the sixth on two hits and two errors. Junior second baseman **Christine Yeomans (Durham)** plated both runs with a two-out single after being inserted into the lineup as a late-inning replacement.

Western junior Magen Dargon (19-5) had pitched a complete-game three-hitter over Eastern ten days ago to snap the Warriors' 17-game winning streak and hand them their only northern loss. Friday, she was touched for 11 hits in a complete-game loss. Dargon had pitched a one-hitter over Rhode Island College earlier in the day to keep her team in the winners' bracket.

In defeating Keene for the third time in six days, Eastern took a 4-0 lead after three innings on an RBI single by Johnson and sophomore third baseman **Arielle Cooper's (Mystic)** second home run in as many tournament games – a two-run shot in the third. Leading 4-2, the Warriors put the game away with a run in the fourth on freshman shortstop **Megan Godwin's (Manchester)** RBI double and two in the sixth on singles by No. 9 hitter **Kelly Paterson (Southington)**, Godwin (RBI) and Rathbun.

Against Keene, Rathbun pitched a complete-game eight-hitter with 12 strikeouts and no walks.

In three tournament wins, Rathbun has struck out 30 and walked one in 21 innings with a 1.33 ERA. -30-

Thursday, May 5, 2011

EASTERN SOFTBALL OPENS TITLE DEFENSE WITH 7-1 VICTORY

Rathbun fans 11, Godwin and Cooper slug home runs in Little East tournament opener

DANBURY, Conn. – Junior All-America **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** won her 16th consecutive decision this year without a loss with a complete-game six-hitter and sophomore third baseman **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)** hit a two-run home run in the first inning to lift top-seeded Eastern Connecticut State University to a 7-1 victory over No. 6 Plymouth State University in the opening round of the six-team, double-elimination Little East Conference tournament Thursday afternoon.

In a re-match of last year's LEC championship game won by Eastern, 1-0 in eight innings, Eastern (27-4) advances to play No. 3 seed Keene State College (28-10-1) Friday at noon. The Owls lost a 5-3 decision to fourth-seeded Rhode Island College Thursday afternoon.

Rathbun defeated Plymouth for the third time this year, the second time as a starter. She carried a 7-0 lead into the seventh before Plymouth (17-12) broke through for a run on two singles and an illegal pitch. Pinch runner Hillary Lemelin scored from third when Taylor Mancini was caught attempting to steal second by Eastern freshman **Megan Bondy (Mystic)**. Bondy threw out two runners in the game.

Cooper's fifth home run of the year gave Eastern a 3-0 lead in the first inning and the Warriors later pushed the lead to 7-0 when freshman shortstop **Megan Godwin (Manchester)** belted her first career home run in the sixth – a two-run shot. It was the first time in three weeks that Eastern had slugged more than one home run in a game.

Rathbun fanned 11 – her seventh game of at least ten strikeouts this year – without walking a batter.

Cooper and junior rightfielder **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** each had two hits for Eastern, which scored three of its runs on batters who reached on walks. The top four hitters in the lineup – Alicea, Godwin, Rathbun and Cooper – combined for six of the team's seven hits, six of its seven runs and four of its five RBI.

Eastern swept Keene this past Saturday, 3-2 and 13-5 in six innings to wrap up its second straight LEC regular-season title.

Saturday, April 30, 2011

EASTERN SOFTBALL CLINCHES SECOND STRAIGHT LEC TITLE
Godwin, Rathbun combine for 11 hits and six RBI in sweep of Keene State, 3-2, 13-5 (6)

STORRS, Conn. – Junior All-America **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** won her 15th game without a loss in the opener and tied the Eastern Connecticut State University career save record in the nightcap to lift the Warriors to a 3-2, 13-5 softball sweep of Keene State College Saturday afternoon and their second straight outright Little East Conference regular-season championship. The second game was stopped in the sixth inning due to the eight-run rule.

Ranked No. 1 in the NCAA New England Region, Eastern (26-4, 13-1 little east) matches last year's conference regular-season record in nailing down the No. 1 seed in the conference tournament, which is scheduled this Thursday through Saturday at the site of the No. 2 seed.

Rathbun (15-0) pitched a complete-game five hitter with 12 strikeouts in the opener and saved sophomore **Christine Akcer's (Milford)** 11th win of the season in 13 decisions with two hitless innings in the nightcap, tying the program career save record of ten. In 14 LEC games this year, Rathbun is 9-0 with two saves, 111 strikeouts and 10 walks in 62 2/3 innings and a 0.34 ERA.

Freshman shortstop **Megan Godwin (Manchester)** had six hits in the doubleheader – three in each game – and drove in three runs, while Rathbun had five hits – including a double – and drove in three runs. Senior catcher **Rachel Soychak (Mahopac, NY)**, playing her final regular-season home game, had four hits and helped Eastern rally from two runs down in the fourth inning of the second game with a go-ahead RBI double. Leading 6-5, Eastern batted around in the sixth inning of the nightcap, scoring seven runs on eight hits.

In the doubleheader, Keene (27-10-1, 9-5) sophomore catcher Nicole Dupuis (Fitchburg, MA) had four hits and drove in two runs, while junior first baseman Sara Stocklinski (Newton, NJ) drove in two runs with two hits and junior DP Samantha Pratt (West Hartford) knocked in two runs. Pratt 's two-run home run off Rathbun in the fourth inning of the first game – only the second home run allowed by Rathbun this year – pulled the Owls to within 3-2. Trailing by that score, Keene had runners aboard in the fifth and sixth but could not push across the tying run. Rathbun got No. 3 hitter Laura Chandler (Wakefield, MA) on a swinging strike to strand a runner at first in the fifth and retired three straight batters to strand the tying run on third in the sixth.

In the first game, freshman centerfielder **Courtney Jobin (Oxford, MA)** homered to give Eastern a 1-0 lead in the second inning and the Warriors added two more in the inning on an RBI double by junior rightfielder **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** and RBI single by Godwin.

In the second game, Keene scored five consecutive runs to erase Eastern's early 4-0 lead, taking the lead in the fourth on consecutive RBI singles by junior shortstop Haley Chandler (Wakefield, MA) and Stocklinski.

Leading 6-5 in the sixth, the Warriors scored seven times, with sophomore first baseman Kelly Paterson (Southington) driving in two with a bad-hop two-run single and five additional batters driving in one run each.

The game was a re-match of last year's LEC tournament final, won by Eastern, 1-0 in eight innings on Rathbun's game-ending home run. -30-

Tuesday, April 26, 2011

EASTERN SOFTBALL CLINCHES SHARE OF LEC REGULAR-SEASON TITLE
Split against Western Connecticut guarantees Warriors a piece of their third title in four seasons

DANBURY, Conn. -- The Eastern Connecticut State University softball team had a 17-game winning streak ended Tuesday night with a second-game loss to Western Connecticut State University, but clinched a share of the Little East Conference regular-season title with a first-game win at Westside Field.

In the first game, junior **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** won her 14th straight game this season and 60th of her career in 69 decisions by pitching a four-hitter and striking out 11 in a 6-1 victory. With the chance to clinch its second outright regular-season LEC crown in the second game, Eastern (24-4, 11-1 little east) lost for the first time up north, 10-2 in five innings. The Warriors managed only three hits off junior Magen Dargon and the top four hitters in the Western (21-8, 6-4 little east) combined for nine hits (two home runs, and eight RBI and scored six runs.

Already assured of at least a share of its third LEC regular-season title in four years, Eastern can clinch its second straight outright championship Saturday when it hosts Keene State College in a 1 p.m. doubleheader at the University of Connecticut. Keene, second to Eastern in last year's LEC championship tournament, has three losses with four regular-season games remaining. Rhode Island College also has three conference losses with six to play.

In support of Rathbun in the opener, Eastern reached two Western pitchers for 11 hits and benefitted from two Colonial errors which accounted for two unearned runs. Senior DP **Rachel Soychak (Mahopac, NY)**, freshman second baseman **Jen Tamindzija (Malden, MA)** and Rathbun all had two hits, with Soychak driving in two runs.

In the first game, Eastern took a 2-1 lead with a run in the fourth on a leadoff double by Soychak and one-out double by Tamindzija. In the fifth, one-out singles by Rathbun, sophomore third baseman **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)** and freshman leftfielder **Stephanie Johnson (Southington)** and an error made it 4-1, and an error and singles by Cooper, Soychak (two RBI) and Tamindzija off Dargon clinched the verdict.

Western prevented Eastern from clinching the outright title on the host's field by racking two Eastern pitchers for 12 hits in the five-inning decision. Three straight one-out walks and freshman centerfielder **Courtney Jobin's (Oxford, MA)** two-run single vaulted the Warriors into an early 2-1 lead in the second but the hosts countered with two in the third, four in the fourth and three in the fifth.

Friday, April 22, 2011

EASTERN SOFTBALL CLOSES IN ON LEC REGULAR-SEASON TITLE

Warriors sweep Rhode Island College, 4-2 (10), 7-3 to improve to 10-0 in conference play

PROVIDENCE, R.I. -- The Eastern Connecticut State University softball team broke a tie with three runs in the top of the tenth inning and junior **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** tied the season record of 18 strikeouts that she set three days earlier as the Warriors defeated Rhode Island College, 4-2 in ten innings in the first game of Friday's Little East Conference doubleheader on the way to a sweep.

In the second game, sophomore **Christine Akcer (Milford)** won her tenth game in 11 decisions and Eastern scored four times in the fifth to break a 1-1 tie en route to a 7-3 victory and its 16th consecutive victory.

Ranked No. 2 in New England, Eastern (23-3, 10-0 little east) opened up a three game lead in the conference race over Keene State College with four regular-season conference games remaining. Eastern needs one win to gain at least a share of its second straight regular-season title and two to win its second straight outright championship and a share of its third title in four years. The Warriors are 16-0 since returning from Florida.

Ranked No. 4 in New England, Rhode Island (25-6, 5-3 little east) had entered play having won 25 of 26 since an 0-3 start.

In the first game, Rathbun (13-0) allowed six hits, one walk and one earned run and the Warriors scored three times in the tenth on singles by junior outfielder **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** and Rathbun's 100th career hit, an infield error and sacrifice bunt by freshman shortstop **Megan Godwin (Manchester)**. Trailing 1-0, Rhode Island had tied the game in the bottom of the sixth on an RBI double by Marisa Jandreau, who was later erased at the plate trying to score on a comeback to Rathbun.

Rathbun outdueled RIC senior Amanda Berard, who lost her first game after nine wins. Berard also tossed a complete game, allowing six hits and only one earned run while fanning five and walking two.

Godwin drove in two runs in the second game with two hits and No. 9 freshman hitter Stephanie Johnson (Southington), Alicea and Rathbun drove in runs in a four-run fifth inning. Akcer won her sixth straight decision, allowing nine hits and three runs before Rathbun came on to record the final five outs of the game.

In the doubleheader, Godwin, Alicea, and Rathbun all had three hits, with Rathbun driving in three runs and Godwin two. Johnson scored three times and Alicea and freshman infielder **Jen Tamindzija (Malden, MA)** twice each.

Eastern travels to Western Connecticut in an LEC doubleheader Tuesday at 5 p.m.

Thursday, April 21, 2011

EASTERN SOFTBALL RUNS WINNING STREAK TO 14 WITH SWEEP

Rathbun wins first game, saves second game and hits 20th home run in 1-0, 3-0 victories

HARTFORD, Conn. – Junior All-America **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** pitched a four-hit shutout for her 12th straight win this year in the first game, and struck out the final four batters and hit her 20th career home run in the nightcap in a 1-0, 3-0 softball sweep of Trinity College Thursday afternoon.

Ranked No.2 in New England and 17th nationally, Eastern (21-3) remains undefeated since returning from Florida with its 13th and 14th straight wins. Trinity (17-9) had a five-game winning streak halted in the opening loss

In the first game, Rathbun allowed only four hits, striking out seven and walking one and protected the only run the Warriors scored in the top of the fifth when freshman **Jen Tamindzija (Malden, MA)** drove in sophomore **Kelly Paterson (Southington)** with an infield ground ball.

With Eastern clinging to the 1-0 lead in the seventh, junior rightfielder **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** threw out pinch runner Melanie Orphanos trying to advance from second to third on a fly ball for a game-ending double play – the first assist of the season for Alicea.

The Warriors survived several anxious moments with key defensive plays in the first-game win. With Eastern leading 1-0 in the bottom of the fifth, Eastern freshman catcher **Megan Bondy (Mystic)** picked off a runner at third base and Rathbun got a ground ball to short to end the threat.

With the game scoreless in the fourth and a runner on second with one out, Rathbun got a strikeout and ground ball to end the inning.

Eastern managed only four hits off Trinity senior Kristen Anderson (9-3), who did not allow an earned run. Sophomore third baseman **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)** had two of those hits.

In the second game, Rathbun struck out the final four batters to earn her fourth save, and hit her 20th career home run – a two-run shot in the seventh -- to add insurance. The homer was the 98th career hit for Rathbun, who had an eight-game hitting streak by going 0-for-3 off Anderson in the first game.

Sophomore **Christine Akcer (Milford)** won her ninth game in ten decisions this year and 15th of her career, allowing only two hits before giving way to Rathbun on the long end of a 1-0 lead with two outs in the sixth and two runners aboard.

An infield ground ball drove in freshman shortstop **Megan Godwin (Manchester)** to give Eastern a 1-0 lead in the first inning and that margin remained intact until Rathbun's seventh-inning home run.

Alicea had two of Eastern's three hits and Godwin scored two runs.

Eastern brings a conference-leading 8-0 record into Little East Conference action Friday with a 4 p.m. doubleheader at Rhode Island College. The twinbill was originally scheduled to be played Saturday.

Tuesday, April 19, 2011

EASTERN'S RATHBUN SETS STRIKEOUT RECORD IN NO-HITTER

Against UMass Dartmouth, All-America fans program-record 18; hurls fourth career no-hitter

NORTH DARTMOUTH, Mass -- Junior All-America **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** pitched her fourth no-hitter in her last 17 starts and established a program strikeout record of 18 when the Eastern Connecticut State University softball team blanked the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth in the first game en route to two shutout Little East Conference victories Tuesday afternoon.

Rathbun (11-0) allowed only two walks and hit a batter and broke the game strikeout record of 16 that she shared with Cindy Chodkowski in Tuesday's 5-0 first-game win and also hit her 19th career home run in the first inning to move her to within three of a program career record in that category.

In the second game, sophomore **Christine Akcer (Milford)** pitched a six-inning, 8-0, four-hit shutout for her eighth win in nine decisions, and sophomore **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)** hit her ninth career home run as Eastern (19-3, 8-0 little east) won its 12th straight game and remained the only unbeaten team in the conference. The game was stopped after six innings.

Having won its last ten against UMass Dartmouth (7-16, 17 little east), Eastern improved to 40-2 against the Corsairs in the series. The Warriors are rated No. 2 in New England and No. 16 nationally in Division III.

Unbeaten since returning from Florida, Eastern gave Rathbun a five-run cushion in the first game by scoring four times in the fourth, then staked Akcer to a quick three-run lead after one inning of the second game.

In the fourth inning of the first game, sophomore **Danielle Bourne (Branford)** plated two runs on a single and later scored along with Cooper on infield errors.

In the nightcap, freshman **Megan Godwin (Manchester)** and Rathbun doubled for the first run and Cooper homered to deep center field to make it 3-0. Two innings after Akcer escaped from a bases loaded jam, Godwin doubled again – this time sending home junior **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** with Eastern's fourth run. In a two-run fifth that pushed the lead to 6-0, Cooper scored on a single by senior **Rachel Soychak (Mahopac, NY)**, and sophomore pinch runner **Katie Sokolowski (Eastford)** scored on a wild pitch.

(more)

Rathbun faced only three batters over the minimum en route to her second no-hitter of the year, striking out the side four times. She struck out the first six batters she faced before hitting No. 3 hitter and losing pitcher Brittany Eldridge, who was then thrown out stealing by freshman catcher **Megan Bondy (Mystic)** for the final out of the third inning. Rathbun walked a batter with one out in the fourth and a batter reached on an infield error with two out in the sixth. In the seventh, Rathbun issued her second walk after striking out the first two batters, but got catcher Diane Barry on strikes for the third time to close the books.

This season, Rathbun is 6-0 with a save in conference competition. She has not allowed a run in 35 innings and has struck out 65 and walked only seven. In three seasons of conference regular-season play, Rathbun is 21-1 with four saves, a 0.36 ERA, 239 strikeouts and 33 walks in 138 innings.

Eastern visits Trinity College Thursday at 3 p.m. in a non-conference doubleheader.

Sunday, April 10, 2011

LATE HOME RUNS SPARK COMEBACK BY EASTERN SOFTBALL

Tamindzija, Cooper help Warriors back from late deficit and sweep of Southern Maine

STORRS, Conn. – Freshman **Jen Tamindzija (Malden, MA)** and sophomore **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)** hit late home runs to help carry the Eastern Connecticut State University softball team back from a three-run deficit after five innings and to a 6-5, eight-inning victory over the University of Southern Maine and a sweep of a Little East Conference doubleheader Sunday at the University of Connecticut softball field.

In the first game, junior All-America **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** pitched a one-hitter, drove in two runs and scored two runs in Eastern's (15-3, 4-0 little east) 8-0, five-inning victory.

Trailing 5-2 in the nightcap, Eastern scored twice in the sixth on a sacrifice fly by freshman centerfielder **Courtney Jobin (Oxford, MA)** and Tamindzija's pinch home run, tied the game in the seventh on Cooper's one-out solo home run, and won its eighth straight game in the eighth when sophomore infielder **Kelly Paterson (Southington)** raced home from second on an infield ground ball by sophomore leftfielder **Danielle Bourne (Branford)**. The homer was the first in the career of Tamindzija.

Freshman Samantha Morse (South China, ME) had handcuffed Eastern in the second game on four hits through the first five innings and Southern Maine (2-22, 0-4 little east) scored twice in the first, twice in the fourth and once in the fifth off sophomore starter **Christine Akcer (Milford)** to move out to its 5-2 lead.

Sophomore second baseman Anna Allard's (Parsonsfield, ME) leadoff double in the fifth – one of five doubles in the game by Southern Maine -- knocked out Akcer, but Rathbun kept the game close by striking out eight over the final four inning in place of Akcer and keeping the deficit at three runs.

Allard had four hits and scored two runs for Southern Maine in the second game, with senior leftfielder Sarah Deroche (Portland, ME) driving in a run with a single and scoring in the first inning, Morse doubling in a run and scoring and No. 9 hitter Stefanie Stockwell (Buxton, ME) singling in a run in the fourth.

Cooper struck her game-tying home run in the seventh – her third of the year – on a 1-2 pitch. Eastern won the game in the eighth when Paterson reached on an infield error, moved to second on a wild pitch, and scored when neither Morse nor her left-side infielders could make a play on Bourne's squibbler to the left side.

(more)

In the opener, Rathbun (8-0) allowed only two baserunners while fanning eight. Rathbun struck out the first five batters before walking senior catcher Melissa Caiazzo (Portland,ME) to lead off the third. Deroche managed the only hit when she legged out a ground ball to short with two out in the fourth.

Eastern batted around in the first inning of the first game and scored four runs on two hits, two errors and two walks, and added three more runs in the fourth on two hits and three walks. Rathbun's fourth home run of the year leading off the fifth ended the game, due to the eight-run rule.

In the first game, Paterson and freshman shortstop **Megan Godwin (Manchester)** each had two hits and matched Rathbun with two RBI.

The second-game win for Rathbun was the 54th in 63 decisions and moves her into second place all-time in career pitching wins, ahead of former All-America Lisa Kirk '84. Rathbun needs 19 victories to become the program's all-time winningest pitcher

In a battle of last year's New England regional finalists and this year's top-ranked New England teams, Eastern hosts the U.S. Coast Guard Academy Tuesday in a 3 p.m doubleheader at the University of Connecticut.

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Trailing 5-2 in the nightcap, Eastern scored twice in the sixth on a sacrifice fly by freshman centerfielder **Courtney Jobin (Oxford, MA)** and Tamindzija's pinch home run, tied the game in the seventh on Cooper's one-out solo home run, and won its eighth straight game in the eighth when sophomore infielder **Kelly Paterson (Southington)** raced home from second on an infield ground ball by sophomore leftfielder **Danielle Bourne (Branford)**. The homer was the first in the career of Tamindzija.

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(more)

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Saturday, April 9, 2011

EASTERN SOFTBALL SWEEPS UMASS IN LITTLE EAST OPENERS

Cooper drives in three runs and Rathbun pitches one-hitter in opener and saves nightcap

STORRS, Conn. – Sophomore third baseman Arielle Cooper (Mystic) had two doubles and drove in three runs and junior All-America Molly Rathbun (Hebron) pitched a one-hitter in the opener and saved the nightcap as the Eastern Connecticut State University softball team opened its Little East Conference season with 3-0, 11-3 victories over the University of Massachusetts Boston Saturday afternoon at the University of Connecticut. The second game was stopped in the sixth inning due to the eight-run rule.

Ranked second in New England, Eastern (13-3, 2-0 little east) extended its northern winning streak to six with its 29th and 30th victories over UMass (13-7, 0-2 little east) in this 30-game series.

In the first game, Eastern scored twice in the third inning and once in the fourth on five hits, two errors and a walk. Junior Priscilla Alicea (Stratford), Rathbun and senior catcher Rachel Soychak (Mahopac, NY) had consecutive singles in the two-run third and freshman Jen Tamindzija (Malden, MA) and Cooper doubles when Eastern made it 3-0 in the third.

Rathbun (6-0) faced two batters over the minimum in the first game and fanned 11. She allowed a leadoff walk in the second and a two-out triple in the fourth. Facing the tying run in the fourth after the triple, Rathbun got a swinging strikeout to end the inning.

In the second game, Eastern scored five times in the sixth on four hits and two infield errors to break the game open. No. 8 and 9 hitters Tamindzija and freshman leftfielder Stephanie Johnson (Southington) drove in three runs in the inning with a single and two-run double, respectively.

Sophomore righty Christine Acker (Milford) did not allow an earned run over the first four innings, giving up seven hits and departing with a 6-3 lead after giving up two opening singles in the fifth. Rathbun recorded her third save without allowing a hit.

In the second game, Cooper singled to drive in a run and scored once when the Warriors moved ahead, 4-2, with two runs in the second. Freshman centerfielder Courtney Jobin (Oxford, MA) drove in two runs with a first-inning single.

Eastern hosts the University of Southern Maine Sunday at 1 p.m. at the University of Connecticut.

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Eastern hosts the University of Southern Maine Sunday at 1 p.m. at the University of Connecticut.

Wednesday, April 6, 2011

IN BATTLE OF TOP REGIONAL SOFTBALL TEAMS, IT'S EASTERN
Rathbun extends personal streak in opener; Akcer posts first seven-inning shutout in nightcap

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. – Junior All-America **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** won her 17th consecutive regular-season northern decision in the opener and sophomore **Christine Akcer (Milford)** threw an eight-hitter for the first seven-inning shutout of her two-year career in the nightcap to power the Eastern Connecticut State University softball team to a 5-4, 4-0 sweep of Springfield College Wednesday afternoon at Potter Field.

A winner of seven straight over Springfield, Eastern (11-3) is ranked No. 1 in New England and No. 16 nationally. Springfield (13-10), swept for the first time this season, is rated No. 4 in New England.

Rathbun (5-0) allowed only one earned run in lowering her ERA to 1.02. She fanned ten and walked two and carried a 5-1 lead into the seventh before Springfield scored three unearned runs after a two-out infield error. Rathbun led 4-0 before allowing her first home run of the season in the fourth on No. 4 hitter Amanda Novak's two-out solo opposite-field home run to right. The HR was the team-leading fifth of the year for the senior first baseman.

Rathbun, who has struck out 48 and walked six this year, has not lost a regular-season northern decision since dropping a 2-1 decision to homestanding Rhode Island College April 25 of her freshman season.

In support of Rathbun, freshman **Courtney Jobin (Oxford, MA)** doubled and homered and among her three hits and drove in three runs. The Warriors scored three runs to take a 4-0 lead in the third on a two-out infield error and Jobin's run-scoring single. Jobin gave Eastern a 1-0 lead with a one-out opposite-field solo home run to right in the second and pushed Eastern's lead to 5-1 with an RBI double that scored senior **Rachel Soychak (Mahopac, NY)**, who doubled to lead off the inning.

In the second game, Soychak drove in two runs with a third-inning two-run homer – her first of the season -- and freshman **Megan Godwin (Manchester)** had her second three-hit game in her last six.

Godwin gave Eastern a 1-0 lead in the second with a a two-out RBI double and scored the second run on No. 9 hitter **Jen Tamindzija's (Malden, MA)** single – her first career RBI.

Akcer (6-1) walked two without a strikeout. She stranded five runners through the first three innings and benefited from a sixth-inning double play.

Eastern opens its Little East Conference season Saturday with a 1 p.m. doubleheader against the University of Massachusetts Boston at the University of Connecticut.

Wednesday, March 30, 2011

EASTERN SOFTBALL SWEEPS WESLEYAN IN NORTHERN DEBUT

Rathbun throws third career no-hitter in opener and hits three home runs in 7-0, 11-3 wins

MIDDLETOWN, Conn. -- Junior All-America **Molly Rathbun (Hebron)** pitched her third no-hitter in her last 16 starts and belted a grand slam in the opener and added two home runs in the nightcap to power the Eastern Connecticut State University softball team to a 7-0, 11-3 sweep of Wesleyan University Wednesday afternoon. The second game was halted due to darkness after six innings.

Rathburn (4-0) celebrated her 50th career pitching win with her third career no-hitter and also hit a fourth-inning grand slam in the team's northern opener. Rathbun set down the first ten batters in order before walking No.2 hitter Tori Redding with one out in the fourth. Redding was the only batter to reach base. Rathbun (50-9) struck out seven and did not allow a ball out of the infield until Talia Bernstein flew out to center to end the game.

Rathbun had missed her last start after being struck in the right knee with a line drive a week ago against the University of Wisconsin-Superior.

Sophomore third baseman **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)**, sophomore first baseman **Kelly Paterson (Southington)** and senior catcher **Rachel Soychak (Mahopac, NY)** all had two hits in the first game. Rathbun homered to center field to drive in four runs and cap a five-run fourth inning that broke the game open.

In the second game, Rathbun hit her 15th and 16th career home runs with a two-run shot in the first and solo blast to cap another five-run outburst in the second and freshman centerfielder **Courtney Jobin (Oxford, MA)** hit her first in an 11-hit attack to complete the sweep. Jobin and rightfielder **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** both had three hits, with Alicea doubling and tripling. Jobin drove in three runs with a second-inning single and two-run home run in the third and scored twice while Alicea drove in two runs with a second-inning triple and scored twice. Paterson extended her hitting streak to eight with a sixth-inning RBI single. Jobin made her first two starts of the season in center field.

Sophomore **Christine Akcer (Milford)** pitched a complete-game three-hitter with five strikeouts and one walk in the second game.

Behind Paterson and Soychak, Eastern did not have an error in either game. Paterson handled 18 chances at first and Soychak 13 behind the plate. Freshman shortstop **Megan Godwin (Manchester)** was perfect on ten chances.

(more)

After pitching ten one-hitters, Rathbun recorded her first no-hitter a week apart in post-season play a year ago. She allowed only one baserunner (walk) May 7 in a 10-0, five-inning no-hit win over Rhode Island College in the second round of the Little East Conference Tournament. A week later, she walked three in a 2-0 no-hit victory over Rivier College in the second round of the NCAA Division III regional tournament. In a 3-0 win over Bowdoin College nine days ago, Rathburn had a perfect game spoiled with one out in the seventh and settled for her 13th one-hitter in 55 career starts.

The complete-game no-hitter was the 29th in the program's 35-year history. Rathbun moved into a tie for third all-time with her third no-hitter. Christia Mohan hurled nine in a four-year career ending in 1990 and Kim Durocher five in a two-year career in 1985 and 1986.

On Sunday, Eastern faces Tufts University at 1 p.m. and Wellesley College at 3 p.m. at Wellesley, Mass. Eastern is the second-ranked New England team in the NFCA national poll, ranking 12th.

Molta, Bob (Athletics)

From: Katten, Brian [bkatten@wesleyan.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, March 30, 2011 8:20 PM
To: sports@bostonherald.com; sports@courant.com; sports@middletownpress.com; sports@rep-am.com; sports@wtnh.com; localsports@nhregister.com; sports@globe.com; Molta, Bob (Athletics)
Subject: Softball Summary - Wesleyan vs. Eastern Conn.

Softball in Middletown, Conn., Wed., March 30, 2011 ---

Eastern Connecticut (9-3) 7/11, Wesleyan University (6-9) 0/3 (2nd game in 6 inns.)

MIDDLETOWN, Conn. (Wed., March 30) -- Junior Molly Rathbun (4-0) tossed her third career no-hitter, missing a perfect game by yielding a walk in the 4th, just her fourth walk of the season in 34 innings of work, and pounded a grand slam in the 4th, to pace Eastern Connecticut to a 7-0 win in the opener against Wesleyan. Rathbun added a 1st-inning, two-run homer in the second game and a solo shot in the 2nd inning as Eastern pulled away from an early 2-2 tie for an 11-3 victory in six innings due to the eight-run mercy rule. Now 9-3 on the year, Eastern, ranked #12 nationally in Division III in today's NFCA poll, is back on the field Sun., April 3, taking on both Tufts and Wellesley at Wellesley. Wesleyan hosts NESCAC West rival Middlebury in a double-header Sat., April 2.

Rathbun struck out seven during her no-hit effort as no Cardinal got the ball out of the infield until the final out of the game when senior Talia Bernstein, who had a 13-game hitting streak snapped, flew out to center. Otherwise, Rathbun got nine ground outs and four pop outs to go along with the seven strikeouts for the first 20 outs. Eastern picked up nine hits in the game, two each by senior Rachel Soychak, sophomore Kelly Paterson and sophomore Arielle Cooper. Paterson had a run and an RBI while Cooper scored twice and Soychak drove in a run for the game-winner, a grounder through the right side in the 1st inning to open the scoring. Paterson's ground single to the right side, also in the 1st, made it 2-0. It was 3-0 in the 4th after freshman Courtney Jobin's RBI single into left before Rathbun unloaded with two outs on a two-strike change-up and sent a towering drive to straight away center.

Both of Rathbun's homers in the second game went to left as a five-run uprising in the 2nd inning spotted the Warriors a 7-2 lead. Jobin again had an RBI single to start the rally and junior Priscilla Alicea added a two-run triple to to left, making it 5-2. Rathbun then made it 7-2 after Alicea had scored two pitches early on a wild pitch. Jobin and Alicea both finished the game with three safeties.

Junior Chrissy Bello drove in all three Wesleyan runs with a two-run homer to center in the 1st inning and a sacrifice fly to left in the 3rd. Eastern starter sophomore Christine Akcer (5-1) went the distance, allowing just three hits with five strikeouts.

Freshman Jess Shevins relieved for Wesleyan in both games, going seven innings in total, allowing seven hits and four runs with five strikeouts. Both Wesleyan starters, junior Dana Levy in the first game and sophomore Caitlyn Grudzinski in the second game, took the losses.

Eastern is now 15-3-1 all-time vs. Wesleyan.

GAME 1 --

Score by Innings		R	H	E
Eastern Conn. St. U.	200 500 0 -	7	9	0
Wesleyan University.	000 000 0 -	0	0	0

GAME 2 --

Score by Innings		R	H	E
Eastern Conn. St. U.	252 002 -	11	11	0
Wesleyan University.	201 000 -	3	3	2

Softball: Warriors Win 7 of 10 in Florida

By Bob Mehta on March 24, 2011 3:42 PM

Williams wins extra-inning game after game-tying home run in seventh

Williams box.htm

UW-SP box.htm

CLERMONT, Fla. - The Eastern Connecticut State University softball team was unable to hold leads in the seventh and eighth innings in a 9-8 loss to Williams College Thursday afternoon at the National Training Center.

At right: Arielle Cooper

In its spring trip finale later in the day, Eastern (7-3) started five reserves against inter-sectional opponent University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (8-3) and sustained an 11-2 loss in five innings.



The loss to Stevens Point was the third straight for Eastern after seven opening victories. Ranked No. 3 nationally this year and the national third-place finisher in 2010, Eastern visits Wesleyan University for a 3 p.m. doubleheader in its northern openers.

Williams 9, Eastern 8 (8 inn.)

Eastern scored five unanswered runs to wipe out a two-run deficit after three innings, pushing across the tying runs in the top of the fourth and three go-ahead runs in the seventh to carry a 7-4 lead into the bottom of the seventh. Williams (6-0) forced extra innings, however, when it picked up consecutive one-out singles before getting a one-out, three-run game-tying home run from designated player Kaitlin Dinet.

The Warriors went ahead again by scoring a run in the top of the eighth on freshman shortstop Megan Godwin's (Manchester) one-out double, but Williams won the game by scoring twice in the bottom of the eighth on an RBI double by Allison Hart and a game-ending bases-loaded single to center by winning pitcher Mary Beth Daub (3-0).

Against Eastern sophomore starter Christine Akcer (Milford) and junior Rosie Manzo (Hudson, MA), the 4-5-6 hitters in the Williams lineup each had three hits, with Dinet driving in five runs. In addition to her seventh-inning home run, Dinet stroked a two-run single in the third to break a 2-2 tie.

Trailing 4-2, Eastern tied the game in the fourth on senior catcher Rachel Soychak's (Mahopac, NY) two-out single that plated Manzo and junior centerfielder Priscilla Alicea (Stratford), who had drawn one-out walks and moved up on a ground ball by freshman rightfielder Stephanie Johnson (Southington).

The Warriors broke the tie with three runs in the seventh on two-out RBI singles by Alicea and Johnson. Godwin and sophomore infielder Kelly Paterson (Southington) each had three hits for Eastern, with Johnson, sophomore third baseman Arielle Cooper (Mystic) and Soychak each adding two. Cooper hit her first home run of the year with two outs in the first inning to give the Warriors the early lead.

Junior All-America pitcher Molly Rathbun (Hebron) missed her scheduled start after a line drive struck her right knee in Wednesday's 6-3 loss to Wisconsin-Superior. She did appear as a pinch hitter in the seventh inning and advanced a runner with a ground ball who eventually scored the go-ahead run. Her pinch runner scored the second run of the inning.

The game took two hours and 36 minutes to play and featured 13 hits by each side, 24 stranded baserunners, five extra-base hits, nine stolen bases and six sacrifice hits.

Stevens Point 11, Eastern 2 (5 inn.)

Stevens scored in four innings and ended the game with a six-run fifth inning, capped by cleanup hitter Katie Krueger's grand slam.

Trailing 5-0, the Warriors scored two unearned runs in the third on a two-out, two-run single by Paterson, who was making her first start at shortstop. The single plated Johnson (single) and pinch runner Katie Sokoloski (Eastford).

In her first start of the season, Manzo (0-2) was touched for five runs (three earned) on six hits. Defensively, Eastern committed five errors which accounted for three unearned runs.

Freshman righty Sara Babbitts (3-1) limited Eastern to four hits while striking out three and walking two in a complete-game effort.

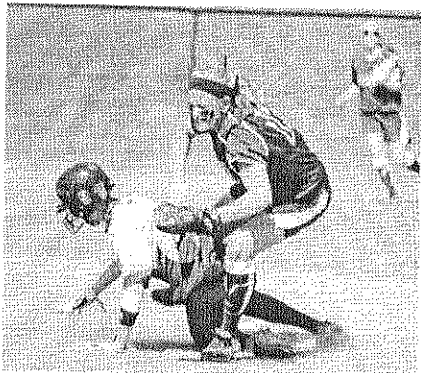
Softball: Wisconsin Proves Superior

By Bob Molta on March 23, 2011 10:00 PM

Line drive sidelines Rathburn in third inning; Yellowjackets win, 6-3

[Elmhurst box.htm](#)

[UW-Superior box.htm](#)



CLERMONT, Fla. -- Sophomore righty **Christine Akcer (Milford)** allowed only one earned run in pitching into the sixth inning and freshman shortstop **Megan Godwin (Manchester)** drove in two runs when the Eastern Connecticut State University softball team edged Elmhurst College, 6-5, in the first of two games played by the

Warriors Wednesday at the National Training Center.

Above: Megan Godwin

Shooting for her 50th career win against nine losses, Eastern (7-1) senior All-America **Molly Rathburn (Hebron)** was knocked out of the game when a line drive off the bat of Taylor VanDamme, struck her in the right knee in the third inning as the Warriors dropped a 6-3 decision to the University of Wisconsin-Superior in Wednesday's second game.

Rathburn (3-0) left the game with the score tied, 2-2 and was scheduled to have X-rays taken at a local hospital Wednesday night. She is not expected to pitch when the team wraps up its Florida trip Thursday with two games.

Eastern 6, Elmhurst 5

Eastern led 6-1 before Elmhurst (2-7) scored four times in the sixth. Junior **Rosie Manzo (Hudson, MA)** came on to get the last out of the sixth on a fly ball and Rathburn struck out the side in the seventh to earn her second save. Akcer is 4-0 this year, 10-2 lifetime in two years.

Senior catcher **Rachel Soychak (Mahopac, NY)** had three hits and junior centerfielder **Priscilla Alicea (Stratford)** and Manzo two in Eastern's 11-hit attack. Alicea had an RBI triple and sophomore third baseman **Arielle Cooper (Mystic)** doubled.

Wis.-Superior 6, Eastern Conn. 3

Eastern led 2-0 and 3-2, but the Yellowjackets went ahead for good, 4-3, with two runs off Akcer in the fifth and tacked on two more in the sixth in handing Eastern its first loss of the year.

Rathburn pitched the first three innings and Akcer (4-1) allowed seven hits and four runs over the final four. Neither pitcher walked a batter.

UW-Superior (10-4) junior **Amanda LeBard (7-2)** won her second game of the day with a complete game. She was touched for seven hits and gave up only one earned run while fanning three walking four. The Yellowjackets went ahead for good with two runs in the fifth on two hits, two stolen bases, an error and a suicide squeeze. Five of UW-Superior's nine hits in the game never left the infield.

Eastern led 2-0 by scoring unearned runs in the first and second on singles from Cooper and Rathburn in the first and a bunt single by Manzo and RBI ground ball by Rathburn. Akcer's two-out double in the fourth followed Cooper's one-out single and Alicea's sacrifice bunt and put the Warriors up for the second and last time, 3-2.

Thursday, Eastern faces Williams College at 11:30 a.m. and Wis.-Stevens Point at 3:30 p.m.

Softball: Warriors Now 6-0 After Sweep

By Bob Molta on March 21, 2011 7:18 PM

All-America Rathbun fires one-hitter, drives in only run against Bowdoin



CLERMONT, Fla. -- Junior All-America Molly Rathbun (Hebron) tossed a complete-game one-hitter and drove in the only run of the game with a first-inning double to propel the Eastern Connecticut State University fastpitch softball team to a 1-0 win over Bowdoin College Monday afternoon at the National Training Center.

At left: Molly Rathbun

Eastern (6-0) completed its third sweep in as many days on the spring trip when sophomore righty Christine Akcer (Milford) and Rathbun, both 3-0, combined on a six-hitter in a 4-2 victory over the University of Chicago (2-4) Monday night.

Eastern pitching walked only one batter in two games and struck out 15.

Rathbun perfect game spoiled

For the second consecutive year in Clermont, Bowdoin (4-5) leftfielder Caroline Dewar broke up Rathbun's bid for a perfect game by legging out an infield single to Eastern third baseman Arielle Cooper (Mystic) with one out in the seventh inning.

Last year, Dewar bunted to the left side as the only batter to reach base before Rathbun got swinging strikeouts to preserve Eastern's 3-0 victory.

Monday, Dewar chopped a 1-0 pitch to Cooper and beat the throw by a step. Eastern sophomore leftfielder Courtney Weber (Groton) then flagged down a hard line drive near the left field line off complete-game losing pitcher Kara Nilan for the second out. After Dewar moved into scoring position by stealing second base, Rathbun walked Toni DaCampo on a 3-2 pitch. On a 1-2 pitch, Rathbun induced an infield fly ball from Molly Nestor to end the game.

Eastern junior All-New England centerfield Priscilla Alicea (Stratford) singled to third base to lead off the bottom of the first inning and later scored the only run. She stole second, moved to third on a sacrifice bunt by sophomore second baseman Amanda Palmieri (Southington), and rode home on Rathbun's double through the right-center field gap.

Rathbun (3-0) outdueled Nilan for the win. Rathbun fanned nine and issued the lone seventh-inning walk. Nilan (2-2) allowed five hits and struck out 12 Eastern batters and did not walk a batter.

For the fourth game this year, Eastern did not commit an error.

Against Chicago, Warriors capitalize early again

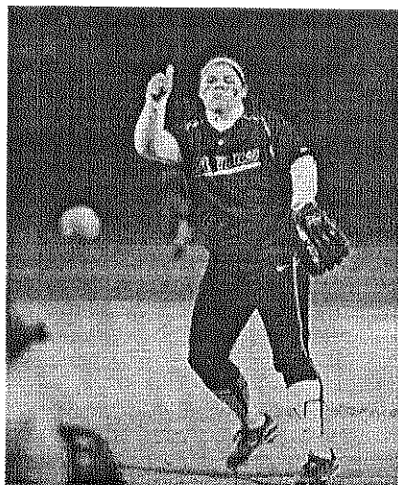
Eastern scored all of its runs in the first two innings and sophomore Christine Akcer (Milford) and Rathbun combined on a six-hitter.

Six hitters had one hit each for Eastern, which scored three times in the second inning on two hits, a walk, error, and wild pitch. After the first run of the inning scored on an error, Alicea drove in No. 8 hitter Weber from third with a single, and the third run scored on a wild pitch on a strikeout.

A third inning RBI double and wild pitch in the sixth

accounted for both runs off Akcer (3-0). Rathbun, who beat Bowdoin College on a one-hitter earlier in the day, pitched a 1-2-3 seventh for her first save.

Chicago managed baserunners in each of the first three innings against Akcer but came away with only one run. By that time, the Warriors had built a comfortable 4-0 lead. Akcer's best work came in the sixth. The Maroons came up with their second run of the game but Akcer returned three in a row



to prevent further damage and strand a runner at third. Freshman shortstop Courtney Jobin (Oxford, MA) snared a line drive on her knees for the first out and Akcer got a foul out and ground ball to end the threat.

Wednesday, Eastern meets Elmhurst College at 1:30 and UW-Superior at 5:30 p.m. (that game originally scheduled for 3:30 p.m.)

Softball: Warriors Chop Tommies, 6-4

By Bob Molta on March 21, 2011 1:54 AM

All-America Rathbun fires seven-hitter in 6-4 victory over St. Thomas



CLERMONT, Fla. -- Junior All-America righty **Molly Rathbun** (Hebron) pitched her 47th career complete game in 48 starts with a seven-hitter as the No. 3 nationally-ranked Eastern Connecticut State University fastpitch softball team downed the University of St. Thomas (MN), 6-4, Sunday night at the National Training Center.

At left: Rachel Soychak

In the first game of the day, Eastern (4-0) broke open a tight game by scoring five runs in the fifth, sparked by senior catcher **Rachel Soychak's** (Mahopac, NY) two-run single to make a winner of

sophomore righty **Christine Akcer** (Milford) in a 6-0 triumph over the University of Scranton.

In a battle of former national champions against St. Thomas (7-3), Rathbun (2-0) saved five of her six strikeouts for key spots in the final four innings, stranding five runners over those innings. Rathbun is now 48-9 in her career.

Eastern scored four runs in the top of the first inning without a hit, combining five walks a suicide squeeze and infield error. St. Thomas starter **Cassie Smith** was lifted after walking the first two batters of the game.

Soychak had three of Eastern's six hits, while first-year sophomore shortstop **Megan Godwin** (Manchester) had two hits and was credited with an RBI when she was walked with the bases loaded in the first. Batting fifth in the order, Soychak reached safely in all four of her plate appearances. She walked in the first, doubled in the third and her pinch runner - sophomore **Katie Sokoloski** (Eastford) - later scored, singled with two out in the fourth, and stroked an opposite-field single to right in the seventh.

Having recorded over 500 strikeouts in her first two full seasons, Rathbun struck out only one batter through the first three innings against a dangerous St. Thomas lineup, but bore down to fan five over the final four innings. With the Warriors leading 6-2 in the fourth, the Tommies got one back in the fourth on a leadoff double, infield error and suicide squeeze, but Rathbun answered with six consecutive strikes - getting St. Thomas' 8-9 batters on strikes, and inducing leadoff batter **Erica Wilson** on a ground ball to Godwin at short on an 0-2 pitch.

Still down by three, St. Thomas threatened again in the sixth. A single and walk brought the tying run to the plate with one out, but Rathbun preserved the lead by getting two pinch hitters on swinging strikes.

In their final at-bat, the Tommies cut the deficit to two on a one-out RBI single by No. 3 hitter **Sydney Marquardt**, but Rathbun completed the important win with a called strikeout of cleanup hitter **Emily Gregory** (0-of-4 on the night) and fly ball to center.

A fourth-inning fielding error was the first for Eastern in four games this year.

The game pitted the only two programs to win back-to-back NCAA Division III national softball titles in the 29-year history of the championship. Eastern was the first team to accomplish the feat in 1985 and 1986 and the Tommies followed 20 years later.

In the win over Scranton (0-1), Akcer and Rathbun combined on a five-hit shutout. Akcer fanned two and Rathbun struck out the side in the seventh. It was the team's third straight shutout in as many games this year.

Junior All-New England leadoff hitter **Priscilla Aicea** (Stratford) was 3-for-4 with two runs scored and sophomore third baseman **Arielle Cooper** (Mystic) was 3-for-3 with two RBI and a run scored.

Monday, Eastern faces Bowdoin College at 3:30 p.m. and the University of Chicago at 7:30 p.m.

Softball: Will Silence be Golden in '11?

By Bob Molta on March 18, 2011 4:48 PM

Defending NCAA regional champions will need newcomers to develop



Head Coach Diana Pepin previews the season. (10 min., 20 sec.)



WATCH VIDEO

WILLIMANTIC, Conn. -- The Eastern Connecticut State University fastpitch softball team has made plenty of noise in New England and beyond over the last three years, averaging over 30 wins a year and qualifying for NCAA tournament play each season in that stretch.

In 2011, the Warriors are aiming to improve upon - or at least maintain - their winning ways, but perhaps with a different style. Last year's ten-man band might be replaced this year by a group of Silent Assassins.

On the way to equaling the program record for wins (39-6 record) a year ago, Eastern recorded its second-highest winning percentage (.859) - highest since the 1990 national championship season. The Warriors also qualified automatically for the NCAA tournament for the first time by claiming their first Little East Conference tournament championship as the No. 1 seed after winning a program record 13 (of 14) LEC regular-season games. It was the first outright LEC regular-season title for Eastern, which shared the 2008 crown.

Eastern was ranked first in New England for four weeks last year and appeared in the national top 20 each week beginning March 22. After winning eight of ten on the Florida spring trip, the Warriors went 20-2-1 up north prior to the conference tournament, beating every team it played at least once.



Half of the starting lineup in the final game of last year is gone, which means that half is back. Two-time junior All-America pitcher Molly Rathbun (Hebron) has returned, as has junior all-region outfielder Priscilla Alicea (Stratford), second-team all-conference sophomore third baseman Arielle Cooper (Mystic), senior outfielder Katie Dinihanian (Stratford), and junior utility player Rosie Manzo (Hudson, MA)

At left, Molly Rathbun.

The most glaring vacancies from last year's team which won its first regional title since 1992 are right up the middle: all-region centerfielder and all-national tournament selection and leadoff hitter Ashley Sullivan, four-year shortstop starter Kim Church, and two-year catching starter Nikki Muston, as well as utility player/first baseman and cleanup hitter Katie O'Toole. In addition to the graduation tosses, Eastern will be without junior pitcher/DP Kassondra Silva, who will sit out this year with a knee injury after

batting .316 and appearing in 17 games on the mound in 2010.

"If you look at the veterans, no one's really loud like a Kim Church or a Sully (Ashley Sullivan)," points out tenth-year head coach Diana Pepin. "We don't yet have any all-out leaders -- we're probably going to be more quiet than anything."

Also returning are senior catcher Rachel Soychak (Mahopac, NY), junior utility player Christine Yeomans (Durham), sophomore utility player Kelly Paterson (Southington) - last year's everyday second baseman - sophomore right-handed pitcher Christine Akcer (Milford), sophomore catcher Katie Sokoloski (Eastford) and sophomore outfielder Courtney Weber (Groton).

Pepin is confident that the nuts and bolts are on hand for another successful season, she feels that the intangibles -- leadership and maturity -- need to be developed in order to turn hope into reality. More than collecting hits and RBI, three of last year's graduated seniors brought stability and experience as four-

year members of the program. Muston only played two seasons but joined the program at the age of 21.

"The veterans definitely want to go back (to the national tournament), but they need to be patient with the newcomers to guide them along," points out Pepin. "I think (the newcomers) are trying too hard. They're working hard but they're not playing instinctively. That's the biggest battle right now. They know where we were last year (i.e. regional champions). They want to be there and be part of that, but they don't necessarily understand everything that it takes to get there."

Toting 46 career wins and a program-record 511 strikeouts into her third season, Rathbun (30-2, 0.75 in 2010) returns as one - if not the -- nation's premier hurlers. Last year's national leader in shutouts (17) and least hits allowed per game (3.007), Rathbun will be supported on the mound by Akcer (14 appearances/9 starts as a freshman) and Manzo. The plan - in the pre-season - is for Rathbun to start the first game of a doubleheader and Akcer and Manzo to go deep into Game 2, with Rathbun available to close it out, if necessary.

"If Molly stays healthy and Christine gives us five good innings and an inning or two from Rosie and have Molly come in and close, then we will be golden, but I refuse to use Molly every inning of every game," says Pepin. "I don't think that's right; I don't think that it's fair to her and the team. It's not going to prepare us (for the tournament). I'd rather take some lumps and have a backup get experience in case something happens (to Rathbun). And I want to keep Molly healthy for post season, as well."

Soychak, who has played third base, catcher and DP in her career, may open the season as Rathbun's batterymate, with two-sport athlete **Megan Godwin (Manchester)** also a strong candidate to see plenty of time at either catcher or shortstop. Freshman **Megan Bondy (Mystic)** - one of three roster players off of Fitch High's state championship team - will also vie for the starting catcher assignment. Sokoloski will provide depth.

The outfield returns relatively intact, with minor tweaks. Alicea will move from right to take over for Sullivan in center, with Dinhanian back in left and Manzo assuming Alicea's spot in right. Weber is available to fill in at any outfield position, as is freshman **Stephanie Johnson (Plantsville)**

In the pre-season, third baseman Cooper (.959 fielding percentage) is the only projected returning infield starter. Paterson (.986) may open the season at first base, but could eventually see starting or regular action in the middle infield. A possible new starting double play combination may be freshman **Courtney Jobin (Oxford, MA)** at short and first-year sophomore **Amanda Palmieri (Southington)**. Godwin could also start at short or eventually fill that role, with Yeomans adding depth at second.

When not pitching, Rathbun (team-leading .402 average) could be the DP, with other candidates including Johnson, Akcer and Jobin. First-year sophomore **Danielle Bourne (Branford)** and freshman **Jessica Ferio (West Greenwich, RI)** may spell Cooper at third base, with Bourne also an outfield candidate. Junior transfer **Jaymie Sommers (Voluntown)** brings a steady glove as a first base replacement, with freshman **Jen Tamindzija (Malden, MA)** adding depth to the infield.

In the lineup, Alicea may also replace Sullivan at the top of the order, with Manzo or Palmieri batting second, Rathbun returning in the No. 3 slot. Soychak fourth and Cooper moving up from seventh to fifth. The Eastern lineup could feature as many as five left-handed bats in Alicea, Dinhanian, Johnson, Manzo and Weber.

The schedule will be challenging again and includes the University of St. Thomas (MN) and Wellesley in Florida, Tufts, Coast Guard, Brandeis and Wellesley again on the non-conference northern slate, and Keene State, Western Connecticut and Rhode Island College on the conference docket.

"We tell the (new) players that it doesn't matter (who the opponent is)," insists Pepin. "You are playing *Eastern Softball*, and you should play hard every time you step on the field. On my schedule, when I give it to them, I say 'Game 1, Game 2'. It's just a mental tool that I use to let them know that it does not matter who we are playing at the time. We're playing *Eastern Softball*."

An 18th NCAA tournament bid in 2011 would provide the Warriors -- and four -year seniors Dinhanian and Soychak - their first stretch of four straight such berths since the program assembled a New England record 13 straight from 1982 through 1994.

As a member of four straight NCAA regional championship teams and the 1990 national champion as a player, Pepin knows that past success does not automatically guarantees continued or future success.

"We're going to have a target on our backs -- we were the number one team in New England last year," notes Pepin. "This year, we're working on getting everyone on the same page, and it's taking a longer period of time. We've only been outside twice, and I think that this has hurt us a little bit. So I think that it's definitely going to be game-by-game (this year). That is what we focused on last year. This year, we need to stay in the moment."