Written by Steve Ostermann
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Four-run fifth propels Grafton softball team to come-from-behind victory

A four-run rally in the fifth inning propelled the Grafton High School softball team to a 7-4 win over Kettle Moraine Lutheran on Monday.

The host Black Hawks trailed, 4-3, after four innings before taking control of the nonconference game.

Kaitlyn Brandenburg sparked Grafton's resurgence with a key triple and drove in four runs for the contest. She was also the winning pitcher.

The Hawks' Amber Tanski led both teams with a 3-for-4 effort at the plate and scored three runs. Sarah Fischer was 2-for-3.

Grafton, which improved its overall season record to 3-5, grabbed a 1-0 lead in the first inning.

Lutheran (1-5) moved in front with a three-run third inning, only to have the Hawks quickly tie the game at 3-3 with a pair of runs in the bottom of the same frame.

The Chargers regained the lead with a solo run in the fourth, setting the stage for Grafton's decisive comeback.

Junior Ali Bartel pitched the first four innings for the Hawks before giving way to Brandenburg. The senior worked the final three innings, striking out three and walking none.

Grafton 11, Cedarburg 2

The Hawks used a pair of four-run innings to take charge in a North Shore Conference road win April 15.

After pulling away from a 1-1 tie with a four-run third, Grafton stretched its lead to 7-2 by scoring twice in the fifth and tacked on four runs in the seventh.

"We put a lot of pressure on Cedarburg's defense," said Hawks coach Stu Hannam, whose team evened its league record at 1-1.

"They only had three errors, but we kept hitting the ball hard at them."

Grafton's 10-hit attack was paced by a 3-for-4 performance by Casey Assmann, who drove in two runs and scored twice. Tanski was 2-for-5 with a double.

Bartel pitched a complete game for the win. She allowed four hits, struck out six and walked three.

Erin Livingston also went the distance in taking the loss.

Homestead 4, Grafton 0

Bekah Rennicke checked the host Hawks in a low-scoring NSC opener April 13, giving up four hits in a complete-game victory.

The Highlanders scored single runs in the second and third innings and doubled their advantage with a two-run fifth.

"They beat us, 4-0, but we really felt it was a much closer game," Hannam said. "We played solid defense with only one error, and that kept us in it."

Half of Homestead's 10 hits off Bartel came from Michelle Zoeller and Britt Schlaeger, who were a combined 5-for-8. Zoeller had two triples, Schlaeger hit a long solo homer in the fifth, and Amy Keel had two sacrifice flies.

The Hawks put runners in scoring position in four innings but couldn't come up with a key hit.

Arin Saunders led Grafton with a 2-for-2 effort that included a double.

The Hawks were scheduled to resume conference play Tuesday against Nicolet. They will continue their NSC schedule with 4:15 p.m. games Thursday at Whitefish Bay and April 27 at home against Milwaukee Lutheran.

GRAFTON'S CASEY ASSMANN got ready to connect on a pitch during her team's 7-4 win over Kettle Moraine Lutheran in a nonconference softball game Monday. The host Black Hawks rallied to pull out the victory, which was their second straight and improved their season record to 3-5. Photo by Sam Arendt