



Gates sets record, NKU earns GLVC Tourney berth



Ashley Gates (right) is greeted by teammates after the freshman's grand slam capped NKU's 11-1 win against Bellarmine on Saturday. The walk-off blast also gave Gates the NKU single-season record of 11 home runs as the Norse earned a berth in the GLVC Tournament.

Norse freshman launches walk-off grand slam in 11-1 victory

HIGHLAND HEIGHTS, Ky. - The afternoon belonged to a trio of seniors at Northern Kentucky University, but a freshman stole the moment with a walk-off grand slam in the second game of a doubleheader Saturday against Bellarmine.

Ashley Gates blasted a grand slam over the center-field fence to give NKU an 11-1 run-rule victory against Bellarmine. The win allowed the Norse to split the doubleheader and improve to 27-21 overall, 13-11 in the Great Lakes Valley Conference.



Ashley Gates (18) rounds first base after her homer.

NKU also clinched a berth in the GLVC Tournament, which begins Friday at East Peoria, Ill. The Norse are currently in sixth place, but NKU could move up to fifth place depending on the outcome the Lewis/Quincy doubleheader that will be played Sunday.

Gates, a freshman outfielder from South Bend, Ind., now has an NKU single-season record 11 home runs. The previous mark of 10 was set last season by Katybeth Coode.

NKU recognized its three seniors - Shatona Campbell, Cara Parker and Amanda Smith - between games Saturday.

Bellarmino had taken the opener by a 4-2 score by pushing across two runs in both the fourth and fifth innings to build a 4-0 lead.

Jordan Basham's two-run homer in the fourth inning began the scoring for Bellarmine.

NKU battled back in the bottom of the seventh inning by scoring twice, but Smith grounded out to second to end the game.

Rose Broderick was 2-for-3 and drove in a run for the Norse in the opener.



Ashley Gates connects for her 11th homer of the spring, a grand slam on Saturday.

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NKU jumped out to a 2-0 lead in first inning of the second game. Campbell's RBI single up the middle drove in Jessica Farris with the first run, and Sam Del Vecchio's single plated Campbell to give NKU a 2-0 advantage.



Rose Broderick beats Bellarmine's Emily O'Bryan (9) to the bag for the out.

After Broderick's one-out triple to right-center field in the bottom of the second, Farris hit a sacrifice fly to extend NKU's lead to 3-0.

Broderick's second triple of the game - a drive to the right-center field gap that drove in April Ehlers and Gretchen Lorenz - gave NKU a 5-0 lead in the fourth. Broderick later scored to make it 6-0.

Bellarmino scored its only run when Basham drove a 2-1 delivery by Ehlers over the right-center field fence in the top of the fifth. Ehlers allowed just three hits and struck out five batters to improve to 14-12.

NKU wrapped up the victory in the bottom of the sixth by scoring five times, four of those on Gates' grand slam. Parker's RBI double extended NKU's lead to 7-1, and Del Vecchio followed with a walk to load the bases for Gates.

The freshman blasted Kristin Gramling's first pitch over the center-field fence for both the run-rule victory and school record for home runs in a season.

Pairings for the GLVC Tournament will be announced Sunday night after all regular-season games are complete. NKU, which is also ranked eighth in the latest NCAA Division II Midwest Region, is making its first trip to the GLVC Tournament since 2006.



NKU's Ashley Gates is congratulated by head coach Kathy Stewart after hitting her record-setting home run - a walk-off grand slam.



NKU seniors Shatona Campbell, Cara Parker and Amanda Smith are recognized between games Saturday afternoon. On the right, Campbell collects a single against Bellarmine in the first inning of the second game, which NKU won by an 11-1 score.