

SPORTS

LDHS drops softball regular-season finale

By Nick Herman
Sports Editor

Errors have plagued the Laurens Raiders' softball team many times during the 2019 season and Tuesday night's regular-season finale against the Easley Green Wave was another chapter in the season-long story.

The Raiders let a 4-1 lead after five innings slip away Tuesday against the Green Wave and an eighth-inning mistake allowed the eventual game-winning run to cross as Easley rallied for a 5-4 victory in Laurens.

The loss knocked the Raiders out of contention for the No. 2 spot and into the No. 4 spot in Region 1-5A, costing Laurens home-field advantage in the play-off opener Thursday night. The team's reward? A match against Byrnes, which rolled to a 22-3 record in the regular season.

Laurens was slated to play today (Saturday) in its second game at either Blythewood or Nation Ford. If Laurens upset Byrnes, today's game will be for a trip to the District II final. A loss to Byrnes would make today's game an elimination game.

After Easley scored the first run of the game on a two-out single to right field in the top of the

first, Laurens tied the score with a Kauree Munyan two-out single down the left-field line in the bottom half of the first.

Rachel Delio, Laurens' starting pitcher, helped keep the score knotted over the next four innings, allowing only one hit. She recorded six of her 10 strikeouts for the game between the second and fifth innings.

Laurens, however, could not cash in on opportunities to break the tie through the second, third and fourth innings. The Raiders stranded a runner at second in the bottom of the second, stranded two runners in scoring position in the third and went down in order in the fourth.

But the fifth inning finally saw the Raiders break through. Cassidy Plaia doubled with one out and eventually came around on a wild throw by the shortstop, who tried to pick Plaia off after she went around second base. The throw went all the way into foul territory beyond right field, allowing Plaia to score.

Laurens then loaded the bases for Trinity Daniels whose two-run single to right extended the lead to 4-1, and it appeared the Raiders were on their way to victory.

But then the Raider defense

broke down. Following a two-run homer, Easley took advantage of an errant throw on an RBI double to tie the score in the top of the sixth. After the Green Wave put runners on second and third with two out, Delio worked out of any further damage as she got a line out to right field to end the inning.

Laurens did itself no favors on offense when it lined into double plays to end both the sixth and seventh innings, killing any potential rallies the team put together.

A key error in the eighth allowed the Greenwave to take the lead. With an Easley runner on second but with two out and 0-2 on the count, Delio threw what was called as a ball by the umpire. The runner on second tried to steal third but Munyan's throw was wild and went into the outfield, allowing what was the eventual winning run to cross.

Laurens' hopes for an eighth-inning comeback fizzled out on three ground balls – two to the pitcher, one to shortstop – that ended the game.

Plaia led the offense with three hits while Munyan, Daniels and outfielder Michaela Smith each had two hits. For the game Delio allowed eight hits and three earned runs, walking two.



Photo by Nick Herman

HAPPY DAY — Laurens Academy volleyballer Kinsley Akins shows off her new college colors, as teammates and her coach pose with her, after Akins announced her intentions Wednesday to attend and play for the Koalas of Columbia College in the fall.

LA's Akins off to Columbia College

By Nick Herman
Sports Editor

From Prosperity to Utopia - or, at least, college.

Laurens Academy's Kinsley Akins made her collegiate plans official Tuesday, announcing she will study and play volleyball at Columbia College. She made the announcement official during a mid-day ceremony with family, teammates and classmates inside the Laurens Academy gymnasium.

Akins began attending LA two years ago, making the arduous drive every day to school - one hour, each way but that didn't deter her from bettering herself

not only in the classroom but also on the court. That included time during summer vacation when, as LA Headmaster Todd Kirk recalled, she would come in every day the gym was open to get better.

"That's the result of hard work," Kirk said of Akins' signing.

Akins said she fell in love with Columbia College, which won out over Bob Jones and Montreat for her signature.

"The fact I love volleyball so much and I was able to get the opportunity and meet the girls, and fall in love with the school, is just amazing," Akins said, adding she felt very welcome at

the college.

Akins said her improved hitting over the past year helped paved the way to joining the Koalas. As for her hour-long commute to school, she said, "it's not as bad now as it used to be, for sure."

Akins is looking to major in speech language therapy in college. She noted how her love of working with kids got her interested in such a major.

As to whether working with children would also include ultimately come back as a volleyball coach, Akins didn't shut the door on such a possibility.

"Maybe so," she said. We'll have to see."

Raiders open baseball playoffs with loss

By Nick Herman
Sports Editor

Laurens High was pushed to the brink of elimination from the SCHSL Class 5A baseball playoffs Tuesday night as the Fort Mill Yellowjackets used a late-game surge to put away the Raiders.

Despite being held to five hits, Fort Mill scored twice in the fifth and four times in the sixth inning to pull away from Laurens for a 10-6 victory in the first round of the Class 5A, District III playoffs. Fort Mill advanced to Thursday's second round, where it was to host T.L. Hanna.

Laurens, meanwhile, was sent into an elimination game Thursday night at Mauldin. If Laurens were to win, it would play again Saturday at the loser of the FM-Hanna game. A loss would end the Raiders' season.

Fort Mill got out of the gates strong, scoring three runs in the first and one run in the third. The Raiders were able to respond in the top of the fourth with a two-run single from Luke Willis that cut the lead in half, but Fort Mill's late rally essentially put the game on ice.

Laurens did score four runs in the top of the seventh to make the final score a little more respectable. Tanner Smith's double brought in two runs and Zak Rice followed with a run-scoring single to right. Smith later scored on a wild pitch.

Laurens was held to just four hits, and no Raider had more than one hit in the game.

Smith suffered the loss in five innings of work, allowing six runs (four earned) on three hits and five walks while striking out six. Heath Bragg replaced Smith in the sixth, giving up four runs (three earned) on two hits and a walk, striking out one.

Laurens Academy 8, Newberry Academy 2 (Tuesday): The Crusaders got a much-needed victory in support of their postseason hopes when they won over rival Newberry Academy.

Dawson Foster went 3-for-4 with two RBI and three runs scored while Noah Moore (three RBI) and Kyle Thompson each had two hits. Cal Robertson went the distance on the mound to earn the victory, allowing one earned run on five hits and three walks, striking out three.

LA took on King Thursday in the regular-season finale for the Crusaders.

PREPS Softball

Clinton 9, Spartanburg 3 (Tuesday): The Red Devils entered the postseason on a high, knocking off the Vikings at home.

Kamryn Akins earned a complete-game victory for Clinton, allowing three unearned runs on four hits and four walks, striking out 11. She also had two hits on offense, scoring three times.

Hunter Benson doubled and drove in three runs while Mac Taylor had two RBI. Maddi Wood had two hits and two runs scored.

Clinton opened state playoff action Thursday with a trip to Chesnee.

Wardlaw 22, Laurens Academy 1, 3 innings (Tuesday): Blair Quarles doubled and had the lone RBI for the

Crusaders in the loss.

Julia Marlett took the loss, allowing 19 runs (13 earned) on eight hits and 13 walks.

Tennis

Clinton 6, Woodruff 1 (Tuesday): Clinton wrapped up a perfect region season (10-0) and moved to 11-2 overall by knocking off Woodruff in the regular-season finale.

Ike Waldron completed a perfect season of his own by rolling to a 6-0, 6-2 victory at No. 1 singles. Connor Donley (No. 2 singles), Anders Orr (No. 3), Hayden Minor (No. 4) and Brandon Campbell (No. 5) all won their matches in straight sets, and the No. 1 doubles team of Waldron and Donley won in straight sets as well.

Clinton, by winning the Region 3-3A title, earned a first-round bye in the state tournament. The Red Devils will open postseason play Tuesday when they host either Indian Land or Seneca.

Prep soccer

Clinton girls 2, Ninety Six 0 (Tuesday): Clinton capped off an amazing inaugural varsity season with its 11th victory, shutting out Ninety Six.

Madison Bagwell scored her 15th goal of the season off an assist from Abby Collins, who then scored her 10th goal of the season in the second half.

Clinton begins state tournament play on Monday.

Clinton boys 7, Ninety Six 0 (Tuesday): Parker Duncan recorded a hat trick, Gavin Kiley had two goals and both Brandon Demery and Sam Tiller scored once to boost Clinton.

The shutout was the eighth on the season for Clinton, furthering a single-season program record.

Prep golf

Greenwood 166, Laurens boys 185 (Tuesday): The Eagles knocked off the Raiders at Lakeside Country Club as the team continued preparations for next week's region tournament.

Bailey Goode and Collin Harlan

each shot 41 to lead Laurens while Preston Mahon shot 50 and Jason Rogers followed at 53.

Clinton second (Monday): In a three-team meet at Heddes Hideaway, Clinton finished five shots behind Union County, and 17 shots ahead of Broome. Clinton shot 173 in the meet.

Phoebe Carles topped the Red Devils' cause with a round of 38 while Zoe Carles shot 41, Sofia Carles shot 43 and Javi Carles fired a round of 51.

COLLEGE

Presbyterian 15, Davidson 7 (Tuesday): Presbyterian scored six runs in the second inning and opened up a 9-0 lead to quickly put away the Wildcats in Clinton.

Zacchaeus Rasberry had three hits, including a triple and a homer, drove in four runs and scored three times. Johnny Cook also homered, had three hits, and drove in four runs while Matt Burke had two hits and three runs scored. Nick Guimbarada, Ashby Smith (two RBI) and Andrew Livingston each scored twice.

Matt Norton got the victory for PC in 3 2/3 innings of work. Norton allowed three runs on two hits and four walks, striking out two.

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