

Press Clippings 4/12/2022

Chicago Tribune/The Courier-News Softball notes: South Elgin's Sammy Jimenez was stuck on 'just the quietest .400 you could hit.' Say no more against Bartlett --- 4/12/2022

Aurora Beacon-News report



South Elgin's Samantha Jimenez (8) reacts against Bartlett during the sixth inning of an Upstate Eight Conference game on Monday, April 11, 2022. (Brian O'Mahoney / The Beacon-News)

Sammy Jimenez, the Upstate Eight Conference's reigning player of the year, was the subject. **South Elgin** coach **Brad Reynard** almost sounded like he was embarrassed.

Reynard's admission? He **always bats Jimenez** in the third spot.

"Before the game, I was toying around with moving her down to sixth in the lineup, just to give her more RBI opportunities," Reynard said. "Thankfully, I didn't."

Jimenez, a senior third baseman who's also one of several capable catchers on the team, went 4-for-4 Monday with an intentional walk to lead the Storm to a 14-5 victory at **Bartlett**.

In both teams' Upstate Eight opener, Jimenez scored three runs and had four RBIs for South Elgin (7-2, 1-0), which held a short-lived 10-run lead over Bartlett (3-5, 0-1).

That happened in the fifth on Jimenez's second home run of the season, a two-run shot.



South Elgin's Samantha Jimenez (8) trots around the bases after hitting a home run against Bartlett during the fifth inning of an Upstate Eight Conference game on Monday, April 11, 2022. (Brian O'Mahoney / The Beacon-News)

Nothing has been wrong with Jimenez's hitting, either. Reynard's star player is "still hitting .420, just the RBIs and home runs are down."

Last season, Jimenez hit .539 with 10 home runs and 46 RBIs.

"She's been on it all year," Reynard said of Jimenez, an NCAA Division II Tusculum recruit. "She still has that gap power. It's just the quietest .400 you could possibly hit."

A big reason Jimenez might have been overshadowed was the noise being made by Nos. 1 and 2 hitters [Cara Cruthers and Hannah Harms](#).

Cruthers is a senior catcher/shortstop and Northern Illinois commit. Harms is a junior outfielder. Both entered Monday's game with five home runs and double-digit RBIs.

[Bartlett coach Jim Wolfsmith](#) was certainly mindful of Jimenez when she stepped to the plate.

"She's a beast," Wolfsmith said. "She's like a sixth-year senior. And with Cara and Hannah along with her, you're going to struggle to find a 1-2-3 combo as good as that, certainly in the area.

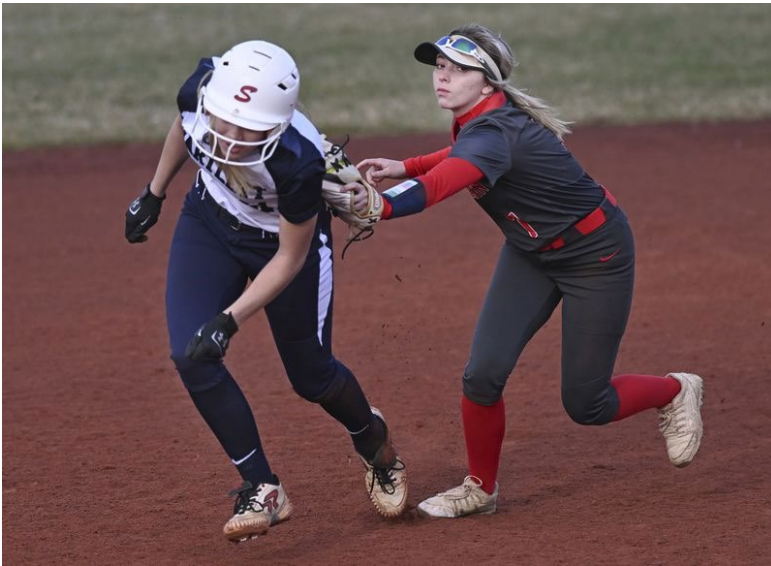
"They can all hit for power. They're all really fast. Sammy is a phenomenal athlete, and when they get on the bases, they're aggressive."

Jimenez receives personal instruction on her catching in the winter from [Kaneland coach Mike Kuefler](#) and hitting help from St. Charles North assistant Thijs Dennison.

Kuefler's daughter, [Paige](#), is a former Tusculum assistant, which put Jimenez on the staff's radar. That led to an invite for a camp at the school in Greeneville, Tennessee.

"My goal has been to stay consistent with my hitting and fielding and try not to think too much about things," Jimenez said. "I had great confidence going into that at-bat on the home run.

"Playing here is fun. It's a crosstown rival, and it was fun getting out to an early lead."



South Elgin's Payton Howell (7) tags out Bartlett's Nicole Young (21) during the fifth inning of an Upstate Eight Conference game on Monday, April 11, 2022. (Brian O'Mahoney / The Beacon-News)

Big boppers: South Elgin now has 16 homeruns this season.

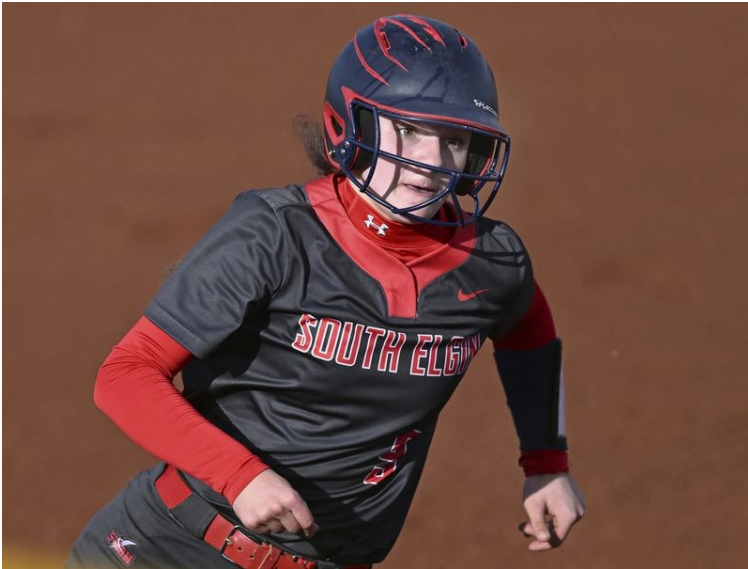
"The kids are swinging it," Reynard said. "The biggest difference is just our depth."

Wolfsmith, whose lineup features four sophomores and a freshman, agreed.

"They can hit one through nine," Wolfsmith said of South Elgin. "Actually, they can about one through 12.

"(Bartlett starter Addie Koth) pitched well but got behind too many hitters and we made some errors behind her. You have to be mentally sharp, physically sharp to be in it against a team like South Elgin."

Wolfsmith was happy his team battled back to go seven innings.



South Elgin's Cara Cruthers (9) rounds the bases against Bartlett during the fourth inning of an Upstate Eight Conference game on Monday, April 11, 2022. (Brian O'Mahoney / The Beacon-News)

Rising to the occasion: One pitcher who's had South Elgin's number is St. Charles East ace [Izzy Howe](#), who delivered an 11-0 win last week over the Storm.

"Hats off to Izzy — she's a great pitcher," Jimenez said. "I think we have to be more selective, learn from our mistakes and keep off her riseball because it's pretty good."

Indeed.

Howe came back Monday and shut down Downers Grove North with a no-hitter in a 6-0 win. The Coastal Carolina commit struck out 15 with one walk. One batter also reached on an error.

Big numbers: Oswego freshman [Aubriella Garza](#), who hit .786 last week, has two home runs and four doubles this season. Oswego East sophomore Mary Kate Quaid, meanwhile, played in her first two varsity games and went 6-for-7. She had a three-run homer and eight RBIs.

Playing up: Newark (12-2) continues to fare well against bigger schools, adding a win over Geneseo to go with earlier victories against DeKalb and Batavia.

Daily Herald

Softball: South Elgin scores early, often vs. Bartlett ---

4/11/2022

By Allen Oshinski, Daily Herald Correspondent

South Elgin scored early and often to open the conference season.

The Storm put up 2 touchdowns in downing Bartlett, 14-5, in the Upstate Eight opener for both team in Bartlett. Sammie Jimenez led the barrage, going 4-for-4 with a home run and 5 RBI.

The Storm scored 4 times in the first inning and never looked back. South Elgin scored in every inning until the seventh, when the Storm left the bases loaded.

Jimenez had plenty of help. Leadoff hitter Cara Cruthers had 2 hits, walked 3 times, and scored 4 runs for South Elgin. Hannah Harms doubled, singled and scored 3 times. Anna Kiel had 2 hits, 2 walks, and 3 runs scored. Madison Hunt drove in 3 runs. Ava McDaniel and Madaline Firmstone had 2 hits apiece for the Storm (7-2 overall).

Winning pitcher CeCe Bell allowed just 1 run and 4 hits through 4 innings before the Hawks finally got to her in the fifth. Kiel came on in relief and got the final 8 outs.

The Storm jumped ahead early with consecutive run-scoring singles by Jimenez and McDaniel and Hunt's 2-run double. After plating single runs in the second and third, the Storm added 3 more in the fourth thanks to some shaky Bartlett defense. The visitors broke the game wide open with a 4-spot in the fifth keyed by Jimenez's 3-run blast to right center.

The Storm appreciated the early offense, "especially against Bartlett, any time you can score in the first and put them in a little bit of a hole," said South Elgin coach Brad Reynard. "Luckily, we've been doing that all year. We've been swinging the bats really well. Just a huge win for us today."

"I think that [first inning] was really big for us," Jimenez said. "I think it was a big confidence boost for all of us, and it took the nerves away."

South Elgin led 13-1 after the big fifth inning. Down to their final 3 outs, the Hawks (3-5 overall) rallied to keep the game going, scoring 4 runs of their own in the bottom half.

Nicole Young drove in the first run of the inning, scoring Lauren Liguori with a double to left center. Losing pitcher Addie Koth knocked in another run with a fielder's choice, and Olivia Liguori's 2-run triple scored 2 more runs and kept the game alive.

"Our kids are resilient," said Bartlett coach Jim Wolfsmith. "They've been like this all season: we get down, a team scores on us, we come right back. I love that about this team: they're resilient."