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## Softball Heads To Postseason On A Roll

After a double-header sweep of Saint Xavier University on Thursday, Bethel softball is riding a wave of success that is unprecedented in program history. The wins pushed the Pilot win streak to 24 games, a mark that ties them for fourth all-time in the NAIA record book. Their dominating play has also seen them enter the NAIA national poll this week at #23. The hottest team in the country will host the National Christian College Athletic Association North Central Region Tournament this weekend with play beginning Friday at 11:00 am.

The Pilots are ranked in the top 10 in nearly every pitching category, with senior Somer Stilley and sophomore Brittney Hire leading the way from the mound.

Hire, a sophomore from Elkhart, Indiana, transferred to Bethel after spending her freshman year at the University of Detroit Mercy. She has made an immediate impact on the field and is 15-2 on the year with a .87 earned run average. The former Concord High School standout has found her stride off the field as well.

"I chose Bethel because I wanted to be in a Christian environment and to grow more with God," said Hire. "I love playing softball with such a great group of girls!"

The Bethel workhorse for the past three seasons, Stilley is having her usual stellar season after collecting MCC Pitcher of the Year awards in 2004 and 2006 to go along with All-American recognition a season ago. She is the Bethel career leader in games started, wins, strikeouts and ERA and carries a 13-4 record into this weekend with a 1.48 ERA all the while looking to make the most of her final post-season.

"We are getting solid pitching performances every game from Brittney and Somer," said Bethel head coach Anna Welsh. "All 32 of our games have been complete games with 15 of them shutouts. Not many teams have two number one pitchers and without a doubt we have one of the strongest pitching staffs in the nation."

The Pilot bats have provided plenty of support as well, averaging over five runs per contest while hitting .308 as a team.

"One through nine, we are successfully putting the ball in play almost every single at bat," added Welsh.

The Bethel offense is led by senior All-American Britny Beneker. The infielder, who prepped at Penn High School, has scratched her name throughout the Bethel career record book. She holds the top marks for home runs, RBI, total bases and slugging percentage and leads the team in each of those categories this season as well.

"Britny is a great all-around player," added Welsh. "I love when she's up to bat because she hits the ball so hard that she is always making things happen. Then as a base runner, she's very fast and aggressive. She is a huge offensive catalyst for this team."

Beneker, like Stilley, is looking to take advantage of her last go-round as a Pilot.

"This season has been one of the best seasons ever," she said. "Our team is very solid on offense



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and defense and I am very proud to be a part of this team. I am not worried about this being my ~~last year because we are all working together for a common goal and that is making our first~~ appearance at NAIA Nationals. We are not looking ahead and right now have goals of NCCAA Regionals this weekend, NCCAA Nationals and then the conference tournament. Then we can think about moving on to our larger tasks of NAIA Regionals then our ultimate goal of NAIA Nationals. My senior year started out great and I can feel it that it is going to end great!"

With overpowering pitching, timely hitting and the chemistry to match, the Pilots are hoping to ride that wave of success deep into post-season glory.