

SPORTS

Yellowjacket Baseball Player Helps Local Duluth Huskies

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It's been a tough beginning of spring for local Yellowjacket baseball and softball fans as home openers for both teams have yet to be played in Superior due to the weather.

The season has finally moved into conference play, where they have only lost one game, that coming against Bethany Lutheran and they sit at 7-1.

Even with limited playing time and practice being held inside, junior catcher Isaac Fugere had high praise for the teams culture, "It's exciting to see the culture of the program, because knowing where it was at before TJ was here and where we're at now, it's really nice to see how far we've come along," Fugere said. For Oakes, the focus is on the defensive side where the team has solidified itself in the early parts of the season.

"If we throw strikes and play defense we're going to be in every single game, which is what we've been able to do," Oakes said as the team's offense has begun to show up as well, "our offense is starting to click now, so as soon as we put all three phases of the game together, we'll really start to click."

Some of the praise defensively and offensively goes to the man behind the plate, Isaac Fugere grew up right in Duluth, Minn., and chose to come to UWS to play baseball.

"I think Superior just fit perfectly with what I wanted to do, they have the career path I want to go into, T&L (Transportation and Logistics), I was able to play baseball here, and it's close to home," Fugere said. Since Fugere came to UWS he has grown into a leader on the field, many times a catcher is because they can see everything on the field, but with

Fugere the leadership has been built off trust.

Fugere is not only a major factor for the Yellowjackets through his leadership and defense, but he is also a bonafide stat-stuffer. Last season he led the team in Avg. (10 or more at-bats), hits, doubles, home runs, and RBIs.

These numbers gave Fugere some extra recognition and led him into a catching position with his hometown Duluth Huskies last summer, a team he watched growing up.

The difference between the Huskies and Yellowjackets was the roster setup. The Northwoods league is full of players coming and going throughout the season.

"It feels like you're going into your freshman year at a place, whereas here (UWS) I feel like I have established relationships and been a part of a program that I know," said Fugere who later added, "I definitely prefer

to build a culture with a team for years to come but it is definitely a different experience I won't regret."

The Huskies and the Yellowjackets have one thing in common for Fugere, they were both underdogs heading into their post-season tournaments last year.

UWS was ranked fourth in the UMAC tournament before upsetting Northwestern and then won the first game in the championship series against Crown before losing the next two.

In the NWL tournament there were four teams from each division that made it and Duluth was ranked seventh. On the other side the Kalamazoo Growlers were the lowest ranked team in the entire tournament at number eight.

Somehow both teams made it into the championship, since Duluth had the higher seed they



Isaac Fugere catching for the Duluth Huskies
Photo by Kelly Fugere

had the chance to play at home.

Unfortunately for Fugere he had lost a championship twice in one year, Duluth lost 8-3 and Kalamazoo won their first NWL championship.

"We (Huskies) weren't expected to win any games, but we ended up making it to the championship game just like in the UMAC tournament. So, hopefully this year we'll be able to win one," Fugere said.

To watch Fugere and UWS at home you will have to wait as the first home game is slated for April 21.

Staying for One More: Softball's Tiffany Kirk

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With the UWS women's softball season underway, for Tiffany Kirk, her favorite memory from her UW-Superior softball career was winning the UMAC championship in 2021.

"We were the 5 seed at the time, and no one expected us to come in and win like we did that weekend. I have never seen a team with that much determination and drive as we had to go through that tournament," said Kirk.

Having played for UWS for many years she has built many relationships through softball, "It has been one of the best

experiences of my life to play with so many amazing people and grow into my sport and learn new things even at the college level. I think that softball also gave me relationships outside of our team with other competitors," Kirk said.

Over Kirk's career, she earned first-team All-UMAC honors in 2022 while leading the conference in RBI's, honorable mention All-UMAC honors in 2021, and earned Easton/NFCA All-American Scholar-Athlete and UMAC Academic All-Conference honors in both 2021 and 2022.

Kirk could add more honors to her softball

career, with the Yellowjackets still in the early part of the 2023 season.

The Yellowjackets are currently in first place in the Upper Midwest Athletic Conference and started conference play with a 4-0 record.

Kirk is the only fifth-year senior on the team and will graduate in May and plans to go into the education field.

Once Kirk graduates from UWS she will still be involved with softball as she is a coach for a local 14u team. She majors in elementary education with minors in special education and coaching.



Tiffany Kirk with her bat in the MWC
Photo by Isaiah Wiita

Kirk started her student teaching at Cooper Elementary School for a fourth-grade class and will move over to

Great Lakes Elementary for special education, where she will work with kindergarten through second grade.

Up Next in Sports

Softball	Baseball	Tennis	Track & Field	Men's Golf
2023 UMAC Crossover St. Bonaficious, Minn. April 14-15 @ Northwestern* April 19 @ Minn. Morris* April. 23 V.S. Crown April. 25 2023 UMAC Crossover Mankato Minn. April 28-29 V.S. Northland* May 2 @UW-Stout* May 4 @Bethany Lutheran* May 6	@ Minn. Morris April 14 @Minn. Morris* April 15 @ St. Mary's* April 19 @ Martin Luther April 21 V.S. Martin Luther* April 22 V.S. Northland April 25 @ North Central April. 28 @North Central* April 29 @ Saint Scholastica May 3 V. S. Crown May 5 V.S. Crown* May 6	V.S. Northwestern April 13 V.S. Bethany Lutheran April 15 MEN's @ St. Olaf April 16 @ Crown April 16 @ St. Scholastica April 18 @ Northwestern April 21 @ Bethany Lutheran April 22 ** Indicates Doubleheader	St. Mary's Invitational Winona, Minn. April 15 Phil Esten Challenge La Crosse, Wis. April 21-22 Bulldog Open Duluth, Minn. April 28 UMAC Outdoor Championship Morris, Minn. May 5	Forester Spring Invite Vernon Hills, Ill. April 14 WLC Spring Invitational Waukesha, Wis. April 15 Bobby Krig Invite Le Seur Minn. April 22-23 Edgewood Invitational Middleton, Wis. April 28

