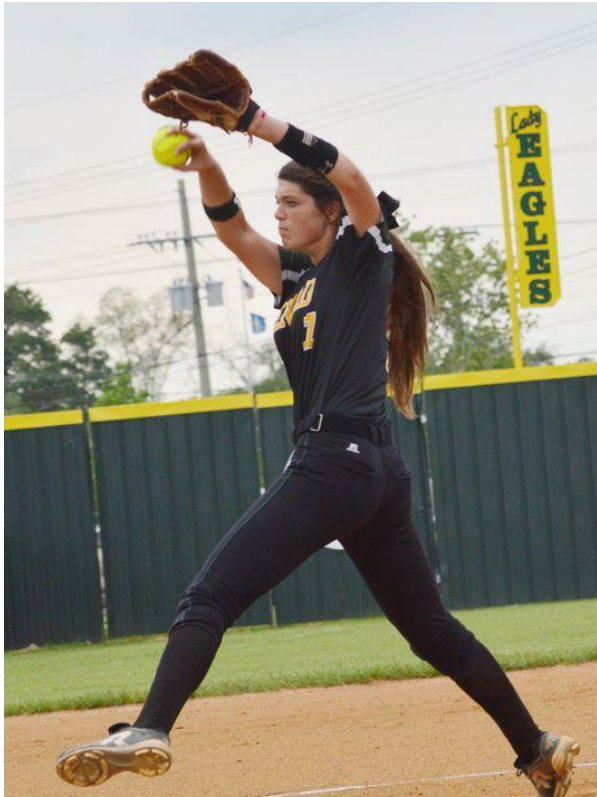


2015 ALL STAR GAME IN PINEVILLE

Prep softball stars align at Louisiana College



LaMar Gafford, lgafford@thetowntalk.com, (318) 487-6352 9:16 p.m. CDT May 21, 2015



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(Photo: Melinda Martinez/The Town Talk)

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Central Louisiana will be home to 36 of the top softball seniors Friday and Saturday.

The Cenla region will once again host the Louisiana High School Coaches Association (LHSCA) Softball All-Star Game as a talented group of seniors will play two final games as high schoolers before they head the separate ways for college.

"This is big for our area," Tioga coach Brad Woodard said. "We have some of the kids from this area playing in this game and it gives them a great opportunity to face some of the best players from across the state." Woodard, who is the coordinator for the East squad, will have one of his players in the game in catcher Taylor Pippen.

Pippen successfully recovered from a torn ACL last season and batted .380 with five home runs and 26 RBI to help lead the Lady Indians to the LHSAA Class 4A playoffs. She will join Menard's Kayla Busby, Jena's Kendi Malcomb and St. Joseph's Sarah Brown as the Cenla players playing for the East team, while Natchitoches Central catcher Molly Simpson is the lone Cenla player on the West squad.

"It is awesome for this program and it helps put us on the map," Woodard said of Pippen's selection. "This is a kid that has overcome injury to get here and to see her get rewarded is deserving. This is not only an honor for her, but for me, too."



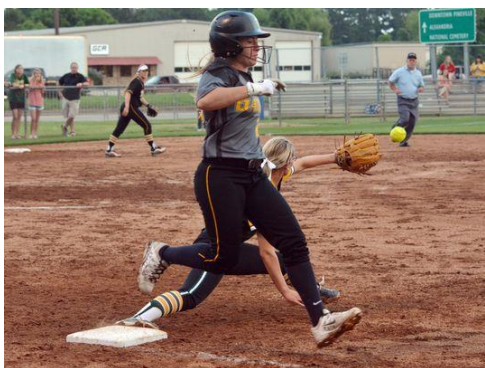
St. Joseph's infielder Sarah Brown (13) will play for the East team in the LHSCA All-Star Game. (Photo: Paul Kieu/Gannett Louisiana) Focus will also be on the two coaches on the respective teams as former Louisiana College coach Tim Whitman faces his former assistant Andria Waguespack in a teacher-vs.-student matchup. Whitman will serve as the head coach for the East squad, while Waguespack is the head coach for the West.

Currently at Ouachita, Whitman won 543 games in 20 seasons at Pineville and LC, as well as Ouachita's first title in 2014, while Waguespack was an assistant for the Wildcats in 2010 and 2011. She returned to St. Thomas More, where she won state titles in 2007 and 2009, after her stint at LC, and Waguespack led STM to back-to-back 4A titles in 2013-14.

The first game is slated for 6 p.m. Friday at the Ward 10 Recreational Complex and the second game will take place at 1 p.m. Saturday at Louisiana College.

East wins LHSCA All-Star Game on pair of solo blasts

LaMar Gafford, lgafford@thetowntalk.com, (318) 487-6352 9:36 p.m. CDT May 22, 2015



(Photo: Melinda Martinez/The Town Talk)

PINEVILLE – As Louisiana’s top senior prep softball players write the final chapter of their high school careers, they still had a few games to play. In the first 2015 LHSCA Softball All-Star Game, the East All-Stars defeated the West, 4-2, at Louisiana College Friday.

St. Amant infielder Kara Gremillion and St. Joseph’s Academy’s Elyse Thornhill each smacked solo home runs to help the East earn early bragging rights. Gremillion’s blast in the top of the third inning broke a 1-1 tie, while Thornhill’s homer added insurance.

“I knew she was about to come back with a strike,” Gremillion said of her home run off of Nora Keehn. “I waited, and right after the ball left my bat, I knew it was gone.” The game was not short of its local players as Menard’s Kayla Busby hit a double in the first to highlight a 1-for-2 night at the plate. Busby later scored when Live Oak’s Virginia Cacioppo earned a base hit for a 1-0 lead.

“Coming in here not knowing anyone and still able to get a win out of that shows that you do have good talent out here,” Busby said. “It’s not like I’m the only good player, but everyone is.” Brusly outfielder Akiya Thymes scored a pair of runs in the first and third inning to tie the game each time.

In the first inning, she used savvy base running to even the match at 1-1 and then struck again in the third, thanks to Sulphur’s Kayla Sheridan driving her in with a double. Yet, it would not be enough as the East took the advantage for good when Ouachita’s Victoria Pederson scored on a passed ball to give the East a 3-2 lead.

Although Busby earned a hit, fellow Central Louisiana mates Taylor Pippen (Tioga), Sarah Brown (St. Joseph’s of Plaquemine) and Kendi Malcomb (Jena) were held hitless for the East. The lone Cenla West representative — Natchitoches Central’s Molly Simpson — shared the same fate by going 0-for-2 from the plate.

The West will have a chance to get even Saturday when the second game takes place at 1 p.m. on Coca-Cola Field.

Busby shines as East softball stars sweep West

LaMar Gafford, lgafford@thetowntalk.com, (318) 487-6352 5:29 p.m. CDT May 23, 2015



(Photo: Melinda Martinez/The Town Talk)

PINEVILLE – Although the West jumped out to an early lead, there was no stopping the East from chalking up another win. The East Louisiana All-Stars notched a sweep as it defeated the West, 3-1, in the second game of the LHSCA Softball All-Star Game.

Menard's Kayla Busby earned the win after pitching four strong innings in relief and striking out three. As Busby threw well on the circle, St. Joseph's of Baton Rouge second baseman Elyse Thornhill continued her tear from the plate as she went 3-for-4 and drove in a run to pace the East All-Stars.

Thornhill drove in West Ouachita's Bobbi Smith in the bottom of the fifth, while Mt. Carmel shortstop Alaina Guarino sent home St. Amant's Kara Gremillion in the previous at-bat as the turning point for the East.

For her efforts, Thornhill, an LSU signee, won Most Valuable Player honors for the East after going 4-for-6, driving in a pair of runs and smacking a home run in the two-day event.

Despite picking up the loss, Teurlings Catholic pitcher Summer Ellyson was named MVP for the West after striking out five batters and giving up three hits in four innings. The UL Lafayette commit also impacted the game from the plate with a double in the fifth and went 2-for-4 for the weekend. "It's an amazing honor to play at this level and to play with this many great people," Ellyson said. "I'm very honored and it was a great two games."

Tioga catcher Taylor Phippen drew a walk and scored a run in the third inning, tying the game at 1-1 after Notre Dame center fielder Elise LeBeouf broke the scoreless tie in the top half of the inning.

While Saturday's game was a showcase of some players who will play at the next level, it also was the end of some players' competitive softball careers. Natchitoches Central catcher Molly Simpson will enroll at UL Lafayette and has her sights set on life outside of the softball diamond.

"I'm going focus on my studies, because I plan to go to law school," Simpson said. "I'm going to miss the game, but I got to make some money."

4C ■ Sunday, May 24, 2015 ■ theadvocate.com ■ The Advocate

East wins; Thornhill named outstanding player

BY ROBIN FAMBROUGH
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LHSCA All-Star Softball

PINEVILLE – Elyse Thornhill of St. Joseph's Academy was all smiles after being voted the Outstanding Player for the East squad at the Louisiana High School Coaches Association's Softball All-Star weekend.

The LSU signee said she wasn't sure what all the fuss was about after she helped the East claim a 3-1 victory over the West on Saturday at Louisiana College's Coca-Cola Field.

"I really didn't think I was going to be the MVP ... it's still a shock," Thornhill said.



Thornhill

East 3, West 1
West 001 000 0 – 15 1
East 001 020 0 – 3 6 0
W – Kayla Busby, L – Summer Ellyson.
Leaders: WEST: Elise LeBeouf (2-3, 2B), Ellyson (1-2, 2B), EAST: Elyse Thornhill (3-4, RBI), Harli Crow (2-2, 2B), Alaina Guarino (1-3, RBI).

"I came out here and played the game like I always do. I had fun in the process.

"I was singing to the songs in between innings. I've made a lot of friends."

Though Thornhill may choose to remember the fun and the friends she made, others are sure to remember what she did on the field to help the East sweep the two-game series.

It was the first sweep since the West won both games in 2009.

And it started on Friday night when the East took a 4-2 victory over the West. The left-handed hitting Thornhill launched a line drive home run over the right field fence, something that impressed local spectators who noted that home runs to right field — particularly one like the drive Thornhill hit — seldom happen.

It was only the beginning for Thornhill, who finished 3-for-4 Saturday, driving in a run that gave the East a little added insurance in the pivotal fifth inning. She finished 4-for-6 for the weekend. William Carey signee Harli Crow of Denham Springs, who was 2-for-3 with a double, was the only other player with multiple hits in Game 2 game.

"When you change pitchers like we do in the all-star games,

it's hard to get in a groove offensively," East coach Tim Whitman of Ouachita Parish High said. "But I thought we had some timely hits. We had some two-out hits.

"We didn't have as many baserunners as yesterday, but we got the hits with two outs. And it was good to see people on base when Elyse came up. She was hot all weekend."

When asked to the reason for her success Saturday, Thornhill offered a methodical explanation.

"Most of the pitchers we faced today were rise ball pitchers," Thornhill said. "I tried to focus on the pitches that were low in the zone. Once they pitched it right where I wanted it, I went and got it."

Each team scored a run in the third. Houston signee Elise

LeBeouf of Notre Dame doubled and eventually scored on a wild pitch for the West. Tioga's Taylor Phippen walked and East courtesy runner Smith of West Ouachita scored the tying run on a passed ball in the bottom of the inning.

West Outstanding Player Summer Ellyson of Teurlings Catholic was at the plate and on the mound for the pivotal fifth inning. Ellyson smacked a double off the wall in center to lead off the top of the fifth for the West.

However, the West did not capitalize. Winning pitcher Kayla Busby of Menard retired the next three batters in order to end the threat.

St. Amant's Kara Gremillion drew a leadoff walk in the bottom of the fifth for the East. Gremillion scored the go-ahead

run on a groundout by Mount Carmel's Alaina Guarino, sliding around the tag on a close play at the plate after West Ouachita's Smith had reached on an error.

Thornhill followed with an RBI single that brought Smith home with an insurance run. It was a tough situation for Ellyson, who gave up three hits.

West coach Andria Waguespack of St. Thomas More noted the contrasting fortunes the teams had with runners on base.

"We got hits when there were two outs," West coach Andria Waguespack of St. Thomas More said. "But it's hard to score runs when you've got two outs on you already. You've got your back against the wall.

We were never able to get in a groove."

Gremillion, Thornhill power East's 4-2 victory

BY ROBIN FAMBROUGH
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LHSCA SOFTBALL ALL-STAR GAMES

PNEVILLE — Kara Gremillion understood the significance of the moment when she stepped to the plate to lead off the Louisiana High School Coaches Association's first All-Star softball game Friday night.

"I was very nervous to lead off the game with a bunch of great players out there," the St. Amant High shortstop said. "I was glad I got that out of the way."

Gremillion put the ball out of the way in her second at-bat, blasting a solo home run to left field in the top of the third inning. That home run and another by St. Joseph's Academy's Elyse Thornhill in the top of the seventh set the tone for the East squad's 4-2 victory over the West at Louisiana College's Coca-Cola Field.

Even though the players were more than two hours from home, there was little doubt that it was a Baton Rouge's night.

Live Oak's Virginia Cacioppo drove in the game's first run with a single in the top of the first and her LOHS teammate Amanda Holliday got the win for the East.

Catholic-Pointe Coupee's Blaire Bass had a double and two stolen bases for the winners. Brusly's Akiya Thymes went 1-for-1 and scored both West runs.

The two teams complete their LHSCA series with a 1 p.m. Saturday game.

"I'll take a win any way I can get it," East coach Tim Whitman of Ouachita Parish said. "You know, I thought we played well. We had some other chances to score runs and didn't. But that's OK. Our pitchers did a great job."

Gremillion, who finished 2-for-4, was the only player for either team with more than one hit. Sulphur's Kayla Sheridan and North DeSoto's Maddie Bushnell each had an RBI for the West.

It didn't take the East long to get the lead. Menard's Kayla Busby doubled with two outs

East 4, West 2

East 101 100 1 — 4 8 3
West 101 000 0 — 2 5 2
W — Amanda Holliday, L — Megan Landry.
Leaders: EAST: Kara Gremillion (2-4, HR, RBI), Elyse Thornhill (1-2, HR), Kayla Busby (1-2, 2B); Blaire Bass (1-2, 2B), Virginia Cacioppo (1-3, RBI); WEST: Akiya Thymes (1-1, 2 runs), Kayla Sheridan (1-2, RBI), Anna Dies (1-2), Summer Ellyson (1-2).

in the top of the first and then scored on a single by Cacioppo that dropped just over the outstretched glove of Notre Dame's Taylor Satchell.

The West countered in less time. Thymes led off with an infield hit, took second on an error and scored on a ground-out by Burshell to tie it in the bottom of first.

Bass doubled in the second but was stranded at second. Neither team scored again until Gremillion led off the top of the third with a home run to left.

Again, Thymes and West tied it. Thymes walked, took second on a passed ball and scored on a single by Sulphur's Kayla Sheridan in the bottom of the third.

"I was a little nervous, but after the first inning I was fine," Thymes said.

Ouachita's Victoria Pederson doubled in the top of the fourth right after the teams made their lineup change and scored on a wild pitch, giving the East a 3-2 edge.

Thornhill padded the lead for the East by launching a long home run to right field in the top of the seventh to close the scoring.

A strikeout in her first at-bat prepared Thornhill to hit the home run.

"I struck out on that same pitch my first time, and I figured I'd see it again," Thornhill said. "So I waited on it. I thought it might hit the fence. I wasn't sure it would go out."

As much as she enjoyed the Friday experience, Thymes has a specific goal in mind for Saturday.

"Beating the East ... we're going to beat them tomorrow," Thymes said.