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Lady Hawks prevail to give Blessed Trinity its first setback

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POWDER SPRINGS - Hillgrove escaped some defensive struggles in the early innings and held off a late Blessed Trinity rally to win, 4-2, and maintain an undefeated start Tuesday.

In the battle of two unbeatens, the Lady Hawks (8-0) used a three-run third inning, including a two-run home run from Jenna Hollenkamp, to catapult themselves to a 3-0 lead. After Blessed Trinity (8-1), a Class AA elite eight team last year, scored two in the top of the fifth, Hillgrove added an insurance run in its half and held the Titans scoreless over the final two innings for the victory.

"You can throw the records out," Hillgrove coach Jason Campbell said.

"It's another game to try and improve and figure out things before you get into region play. Obviously, they're a quality team. They hit the ball well and they're coached well. We didn't take them lightly by any means just because they were AA. They were 8-0 and we knew they were good coming in."

The Lady Hawks got the majority of their offense from the top of the batting order. Sarah Johnson finished 2-for-2 with a walk and scored two runs, Kim McMillan was 2-for-3 with a run and an RBI and Hollenkamp batted 2-for-3 with a run and three RBIs.

The production Hillgrove received from its first three batters helped to diminish the success Blessed Trinity pitcher Mary Bryce Pring had against the rest of the lineup.

"We didn't hit (Pring) like I thought we would," Campbell said. "She's a left-handed freshman pitcher and I knew she would kind of give us some fits, but I was not overly impressed with our hitting (Tuesday).

"We did come through in the clutch with Jenna's home run, but you take what you can get. We're not always going to come out and get 10 to 12 hits every day and score eight or nine runs, so we'll take the win and be happy with it."

The victory didn't come easy, however, for the Lady Hawks.

Blessed Trinity's Moira Sullivan led off the game with a single and reached third

on two passed balls. She was thrown out at home on Katie Hawkins' at-bat as Hillgrove got out of the early threat.

An error in the third put Sullivan on base again. She advanced to second on another passed ball and reached third on Macy Terry's single, but the Lady Hawks were again able to keep Sullivan from scoring.

With runners on second and third with one out, Hawkins reached on a fielder's choice as McMillan threw Sullivan out at home to preserve the scoreless tie.

In the bottom of the inning, Hillgrove's Sarah Johnson singled with two outs and stole second. She scored on McMillan's two-out single to right and Hollenkamp homered in the next at-bat to put the Lady Hawks in front, 3-0.

"Kim scored the first run, so I didn't have a lot of pressure coming up," Hollenkamp said of her home run. "It was a good way to end the inning. I did feel like it fired up the team because we were the first to score. It opened up a lot of doors, defensively and offensively."

Blessed Trinity threatened in the fifth, as Hawkins' two-out double plated two runs to trim the Lady Titans' deficit to 3-2. But Hillgrove pitcher Shelby Scott - who allowed two runs on five hits, struck out seven and walked four in a complete-game outing - stranded runners on first and second to end the Lady Titans' chances.

Hollenkamp drove in an insurance run for Hillgrove in the fifth, scoring Johnson from second, and Scott closed the door on the Lady Titans in the final two innings, stranding a runner on second in each frame.

"In eight games, we haven't played a bad team yet," Campbell said. "We're playing well right now, but at times we're showing that we're human and we make mistakes. We just have to get out of those mistakes."

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