



## AAE's Williams fans 19 AAE takes advantage of 9 walks, 2 hit batters

By C.J. DAFT ~ STAFF WRITER

**APPLE VALLEY** • The Excelsior softball team came into Tuesday's game with Academy for Academic Excellence tied with the Knights for first place in the Agape League.

The Eagles left knowing that they have some work to do if they're going to challenge defending champion AAE for the league title. Pitcher Cassie Williams struck out a career-high 19 batters, and the Knights took advantage of Excelsior starter Julianna Phillips' wildness to win 8-1.

Williams gave up one run on two hits with a walk and a hit batter. She induced a ground out and popout in the first inning, but other than that all of the Eagles' (10-5, 3-1 AL) outs were whiffs.

"We're used to seeing pitchers much slower," Excelsior coach Mikel Dickinson said. "We haven't seen a pitcher this fast with that much control."

Williams' previous career high for strikeouts was 16, accomplished twice before.

"All of my pitches were moving," Williams said. "It was a good game."

While Williams was in control for AAE (11-4, 4-0 AL), Excelsior's Phillips lost command beginning in the third inning. Phillips walked nine batters and hit two others while giving up six runs on just one hit before being replaced with no outs in the fourth.

The Knights scored their first two runs in the third inning without a hit. They added five runs in the fourth via an RBI single by Victoria Bonato, four walks and a hit batter.

AAE coach Brian Frederick said working on being patient at the plate in practice has paid off.

"That's one thing we teach them in practice, wait for their pitch," Frederick said. "For the most part, they wait for that first strike and then start timing their swings from there."

Both teams had won their previous three league games by mercy rule. AAE had pounded its opposition 63-2, and Excelsior 68-16.

"We came into this game, and we let the girls know this was the championship game and we'll have one more with them at the end of the season," Frederick said.

The Knights are ranked second in the most recent CIF-Southern Section Division 7 poll.

Rebekkah Keller went 1-for-2 with a triple and a run scored for AAE. Bonato scored twice with an RBI, Amber LoPatriello scored twice and Williams brought in two runs on two walks.

Excelsior's Bailey Prutsos drove in Jamie Blanus on an RBI single in the top of the fourth and later had a bit of a scare when she was beamed in the helmet in the seventh inning. She was replaced by a pinch runner, and Dickinson said she never lost consciousness and she passed a concussion test.



AAE plays at Lucerne Valley on Friday, and Excelsior hosts Victor Valley Christian on Thursday. The Eagles and Knights will play each other again on May 10.

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Phillips, Corona (4) and Caudillo; Williams and Edwards. WP — Williams; LP — Phillips. 3B — Keller (A).

DAVID PARDO, DAILY PRESS

Academy for Academic Excellence's Cassie Williams pitches against Excelsior on Tuesday.

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