

## Prep Fastpitch | Kennedy, Merlich blank Kentwood 2-0

By Erick Walker

Special to *The Seattle Times*

March 15, 2007



Karli Merlich allowed just two hits vs. Kentwood.

KENT — It may have been the season opener, but Kennedy ace Karli Merlich proved to be in midseason form Thursday.

Merlich delivered a two-hit gem and struck out 16 in a 2-0 nonleague win over Kentwood at Service Club Ballfields.

But it wasn't all Merlich's arm. The left-handed junior also delivered with the bat, driving in one run with a triple off the center-field fence and scoring the other run.

"I just felt ready to get out of the gym," said Merlich, who already has verbally committed to play softball at Texas Tech. She plays her summer softball with the Washington Sidewinder 18 Gold.

The two-hit, 16-strikeout performance wasn't anything out of the ordinary for Merlich, who posted a 0.00 earned-run average last year while striking out 203 batters in 123 innings.

"The 16 strikeouts were good ... but 20 would've been better," Merlich deadpanned. "I'm satisfied."

Though Kentwood (0-1) is expected to challenge for the South Puget Sound League North Division crown, it was clear in the early innings that Merlich and the Lancers (1-0) would have their way.

Merlich retired the first four batters she faced — three by strikeout — and didn't allow a hit until two outs in the third, when Kentwood's Liane DeHart legged out a bunt single.

Merlich helped Kennedy get all the runs it would need in the first inning. She walked to open the inning, moved to second on a wild pitch, then scored on a single to left field by Brittany Montgomery.

In the third, Merlich pushed Kennedy's lead to 2-0 by roping an RBI triple that one-hopped off the center-field fence, scoring Maggie Whaley.

"I haven't seen all the players in the state, but she's got to be one of the top," said Kennedy coach Dino Josie, whose team is a favorite to win the Seamount League crown. "I wouldn't trade her for anybody in the state. I think she is the best."