

Softball *from B1*

the Lions' field general for all three of last week's games.

"She's the rock of the team. Josie knows (pitcher) Kailey (Cox) is primarily our shortstop, and she does a great job keeping Kailey in the game on the mound," Danielle said. "I love that she takes that leadership role. We have high hopes for her."

After that solid victory over the Vikings, the Lions faced their biggest test so far — and likely one of their biggest tests this season — when they welcomed the Marist Spartans to town for a twin-billing last Friday (April 16). Glorious spring weather greeted the games, held at 3 p.m. and 5 p.m., with doubleheaders set to

become a standard feature in this shortened six-week season. Coach Kris Challengburg said that he was encouraged by his team's play early on in game one.

"I thought that for the most part in the first game, we competed well," he said.

Cottage Grove even rallied a few hits early on in the first contest. Marist jumped out to an early 1-0 lead in the first inning, but the Lions — behind Cox on the mound — blanked the Spartans in the second and third frames.

And yet the Lions would eventually prove unable to handle the firepower of Spartan pitcher Malia Williams, who at this early stage appears to easily be one of the most dominant hurlers in the Sky-Em League. Errors in the field by the Lions eventu-



JON STINNETT/FOR THE SENTINEL

CGHS junior Peyton Baird **slides home for the Lions' lone run in game two of last Friday's doubleheader with Marist. Tomorrow, the Lady Lions will be on the road at Marshfield in another doubleheader beginning at 3 p.m., this time against the Lady Pirates.**

ally helped conspire to put the game out of reach, and Marist won going away, 10-0.

"If we eliminate the bobbles in the field, I think we'd be right in it," Danielle said. "Half their runs were the result of little, tiny errors — and we could have made a few better throws."

Still, she lauded the Lions' overall defensive effort, expressing confidence that the team will continue to improve going forward.

Unfortunately for the Lions on Friday, however, Williams again toed the rubber for the Spartans in game two, and Marist paired her dominant

pitching with timely hits throughout the afternoon. The momentum from the Spartans' win in game one carried over into an 11-run first inning that led to another lopsided win in the nightcap, 22-1.

"You've got to tip your hat to Marist; their pitcher was so lights-out," Kris said. "Siuslaw was fairly young, so to go from no pitching one game to elite pitching the next was quite a difference. We tried everything to make her work, to make her throw lots of pitches, but it was just her day."

Nonetheless, he highlighted excellent defensive

performances from second and third baseman Cassidy Humphrey and Emma Hitt. The Lions were also able to mount a rally that plated a run in the bottom of the third, when Josie Hitt singled home Peyton Baird.

Kris said that the team has a clear picture of where its improvement must happen going forward.

"When we break down our games, it's pretty clear what we need to work on: speed in hitting," he said. "I don't think we're going to see pitching that dominant until we play Marist again, but I'm looking forward to playing them again at the

end of the season. Defensively, we've still got some work to do, but we'll just be continuing to practice hard to get better every day."

The Lions took on a tough Junction City team Tuesday (after press deadlines) and will travel to Marshfield this Friday for another doubleheader.

"It'll be another learning experience, a chance to do more growing," Kris said. "Most of these girls haven't played ball in almost two years competitively. We're trying to get back into the swing of things, and it's going to take a hot minute."

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