

SERIOUS SLUGGER

Ellis smashes conference and school home run records

Erin Brush | Managing Editor

Senior Hailey Ellis puts fear in the eyes of every pitcher in the conference. With the school and conference record of 12 season home runs under her belt, rival pitchers have good reason to shake on the mound. According to Ellis, she can sense her opposition's nervousness when she steps up to bat.

"Reading the defense that I hit off of, I can tell that they're scared when I walk up," Ellis said. "I see it on the pitcher that she's nervous. I see it from the coaches when they try to intentionally walk me and the pitcher misses her spot. The second I hit (a home run), they usually try to pull their pitcher. I think seeing the weakness in the defense and the cheers from the dugout and seeing my mom in the stands, everything builds up and I feel like I can do it."

As of last week, Ellis resides at number 12 on the all-time home run per season state leaderboard. This year's success story is a very different tale from the 2014 season in which Ellis had a season total of one home run. According to Ellis, the difference between this year and the last is a mystery to her.

"I don't know what the difference has been," Ellis said. "My swing is a lot smoother. We started this thing called The Program. It's physically challenging and mentally. No matter what pitchers we face, I know the pitchers we hit off of at practice are better than any team in the GMC. That kind of confidence really helps."

According to Ellis, her quirky new swing gets its fair share of criticism.

"The only comparison of my swing I could do is compare it to Derek Jeter," Ellis said. "I have a lot of movement in my swing and people think that I start my hands too high and people think I can't get through the zone. I have a really high swing. If it's a quicker pitcher I'm already set, but if it's a slower pitcher I build up a lot of dirt in the back of the batter's box and then I just stroke it."

Ellis said she has a sixth sense when it comes to her hits.

"When I hit home runs over dead center, I know they're gone," Ellis said. "You can just see it and you can hear it from the crowd. I usually know. When we're playing Lakota West and I tie the game in the bottom of the ninth and we are in extra innings, that feels good."

As her home run total continues to climb upward, Ellis said she refuses to be satisfied with her current stats.

"A solid goal for me is to get to 16 (home runs)," Ellis said. "I'm going to make it happen."

