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Panther Sports News

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LS-Softball

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--Eastern Illinois University's softball team may finally get what it's been seeking.

The Lady Panthers, 8-11, have battled the elements more than their opponents this season, leaving the squad eager for clear skies and competition. That competition may finally occur this week with a three-day homestand as warmer, drier weather enters the area.

"We're really eager to have the chance to get in some games," EIU head coach Deanna D'Abbraccio said. "The weather has really hindered us and we need some playing time to pull our game together."

"We're hitting the ball very, very well right now, but our defense has been pretty erratic. I think that's because we haven't had enough playing time. And not being able to throw is hurting our pitchers badly," she added.

"It's not going to help us any that we've been sitting around waiting to play and then face Indiana, which was ranked sixth in the nation in a pre-season poll," D'Abbraccio said. "But I think we're really fired up and could be a real spoiler for everyone the rest of the way."

When the Hoosiers face Eastern at 3 p.m. Thursday they will see a team that owns a .258 batting average, second best in the Gateway Conference. Also, two of Lady Panthers rank in the top four among the league's best hitters.

Junior pitcher Shelly Eddington (Brighton-Southwestern/Lewis & Clark CC), who will start one of the contests against IU, boasts a .419 average, second best in the GCAC, and senior Mary Tiegs (Lake Bluff-Libertyville) carries a .354 average.

Also, two EIU hurlers carry ERAs sufficiently low to rank them in the league's top 10--senior Donna Ridgway (Annapolis-Hutsonville) (1.02), who is slated to throw against IU, and junior Sandy Muskopf (Belleville West) (0.90).

Ridgway and Eddington will probably start again Friday, D'Abbraccio said, when league foe Northern Iowa challenges the Lady Panthers beginning at 2 p.m. Saturday's 2 p.m. double header with Drake, another GCAC member, will feature Muskopf and freshman Sonja Rhoda (Cahokia) as starting pitchers.