

Seven Strong: Bringing Home the Gold

Thorp Lady Cardinals make history by bringing home the first gold trophy for softball

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There's no question that the Thorp Lady Cardinals' softball team was one to watch throughout the 2016 spring season.

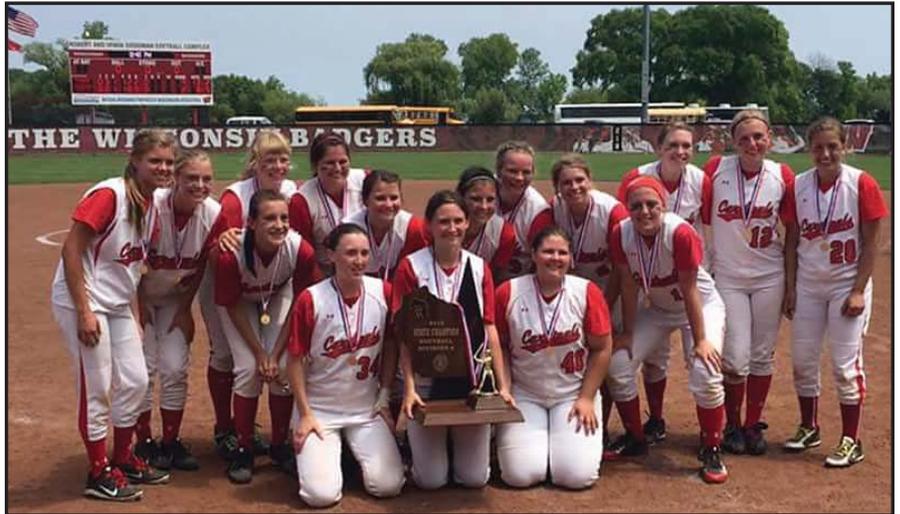
Stacked with three core senior athletes—including Lizzy Schimke, the aggressive left-handed pitcher; Taylor Stroinski, the second baseman known for stealing her way around the diamond; and Karley Kryzanski, the catcher who packs a punch when she's at bat—as well as a strong line-up of up-and-coming competitors, the Lady Cardinals became a tight-flying flock more along the lines of family than just teammates.

The three seniors watched the 2012 Cardinal team make a journey to state as eighth grade players who were still growing in the sport—but it ignited their passion to make it to Madison on their own.

Not only was this year's Lady Cardinal team jam-packed with talent, skill, and experience, they were also led by a veteran coach with one major goal in mind: To be playing the best softball at the end.

Coach Brad Ceranski—who has led the softball program to multiple Regional and Sectional Championship trophies and a couple trips to state—was still looking to add that one last crowning achievement, a gold trophy from the state tournament.

Never obtained by a softball team in the school's history, a State Championship was the ultimate goal—and after ending the regular season with a record of 26-2 and winning the Sectional Championship, the girls were on the right track.



Pictured: Front row (L-R): Karley Kryzanski, Taylor Stroinski, and Lizzy Schimke. Middle row (L-R): Kasey Moskiewicz, Madisyn Greschner, Jordan Chapman, Lyndsey Tyznik, and Heather Messing. Back row (L-R): Gracie Hauser, Raleigh Frankewicz, Hailey Zurakowski, Megan Schesel, Kaitlyn Tyznik, Cassidy Stroinski, Ellie Zurakowski, and Ellie Windl.

At the state tournament in Madison, Thorp hit the ground running against the Oakfield Oaks—pummeling their opponent 10-0 in five innings before heading to the championship game.

Unflustered by the fact that they'd be playing against the Southwestern Wildcats—who had showed off their batting skills in the semi-final game and won their way to the championship game with a 16-8 score—the Cardinals jumped out into the lead right away.

Never trailing once throughout the entire state tournament, the Cardinals took down the Wildcats 9-2, sending the team and all the fans into an eruption of excited cheers.

History had officially been made! The Thorp Lady Cardinals' softball team had won their very first gold trophy at the State Tournament!

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Lady Cardinals Sweep State Tournament to Bring Home the Gold

Thorp 10 – Oakfield 0

The sun was high in the sky and the summer's heat was beating down at Goodman diamond in Madison on Friday, June 10, as the Thorp Lady Cardinals took on the Oakfield Oaks in the first round of Division 4 games in the hopes of becoming the 2016 State Softball Champions.

Up at bat in the top of the first inning, Thorp set the pace. Lead off hitter Taylor Stroinski waited out Oakfield's pitcher, proving she wasn't about to swing at just any pitch—she was going to make the pitcher work for it. Taylor walked her way to first but immediately stole her way to second and then advanced to third on a sacrifice bunt by Jordan Chapman. Karley Kryzanski, who had made it onto first on a throwing error, followed suit by stealing second. Stroinski's run was cut short as she was called out at home, but Lyndsey Tyznik and Ellie Zurakowski soon joined their teammates on base. Lyndsey, Karley, and Ellie were aggressive on the diamond, each scoring a run to pull ahead 3-0 by the end of the top of the inning.

In the bottom of the inning, Oakfield racked up two hits, but Lizzy Schimke struck out two hitters and the outfield caught the fly ball for the third out before the Oaks could get beyond third base.

The Cards caught a tough break in the second inning as the Oaks sent the next three at-bats back to the dugout without scoring any runs. Thorp returned the favor by catching two fly balls and striking out another player for three consecutive outs. Taylor Stroinski led off with a triple to right center, but she was unable to cross home plate as Oakfield's defense earned the three outs. The Oaks got in a couple singles during the bottom of the third inning, but the Cards shut it down, the score still reading 3-0 heading into the fourth inning.

The top of the fourth was when the Cardinals' offense really broke out—sending a strong message that they were in it to win it. Ellie Zurakowski

led off with a double down the infield line and Lizzy Schimke reached on a throwing error by the Oaks' third baseman. Ellie advanced to third and then was waved home on an Oaks error. Kasey Moskiewicz joined the game, serving as the pinch runner for Lizzy. She sprinted towards second as Kaitlyn Tyznik singled to center field.

Megan Schesel went after a sacrifice bunt to put her teammates in a scoring position. Cassidy Stroinski reached first on a fielder's choice, but Kasey was called out at home. Taylor Stroinski was back at bat, and hit a single through the left side and advanced to second on the throw, batting in Cassidy and Kaitlyn. Taylor wasn't done yet; the senior stole her way onto third base and then ran home on a throwing error as Jordan Chapman made it onto first on the same throwing error. Karley Kryzanski hit a single to center field and advanced to second on the throw, batting in Jordan. The Oaks' pitcher threw a wild pitch, giving Karley enough time to make it onto third. With Lyndsey Tyznik at bat, Kryzanski scored as Lyndsey reached on a fielding error. With six runs scored off of four hits and three errors by the Oaks, the Cardinals had broadened their lead significantly, bringing the score to 9-0.

In the bottom of the fourth inning, the Cardinals' outfield backed up their pitcher, scooping up ground balls to get the outs at first and holding the score firmly at 9-0. Back at bat in the top of the fifth, Lizzy Schimke opened with a single to center field—bringing Kasey Moskiewicz back on base to pinch run for Lizzy. As Kaitlyn Tyznik ran her way to first on a fielder's choice, Moskiewicz was called out at second. The Oaks earned the second out, catching a fly ball hit by Megan Schesel.

Even with two outs, the Cards kept their cool. Cassidy Stroinski waited out the pitcher and walked her way to first, pushing Kaitlyn to second base before Coach Ceranski sent in pinch runner Heather Messing for Kaitlyn. Taylor Stroinski hit a single to center field, batting in Heather and sending Cassidy to third. Taylor stole her way to second and Jordan Chapman walked

her way to first—loading the bases, but a caught pop-up ended the Cardinals' at-bat. But since the Cards had scored that one run—the ten-run rule was in place. The Cardinals were only three outs away from claiming the win!

In the bottom of the fifth inning, Thorp's outfield earned two quick outs on ground balls, but one Oaks runner was on the diamond. With two outs accounted for, pitcher Lizzy Schimke threw down her best and struck out the final at-bat! Thorp won the game with a final score of 10-0 in five innings! The Cardinals were officially one game away from becoming the first softball team in Thorp's history to come home with a gold ball.

Leading hitters: Taylor Stroinski, 3 for 3, triple, 3 RBI; Lizzy Schimke, 2 for 2.

Thorp 9 – Southwestern 2

Excitement was at an all-time high on Saturday, June 11, as the Thorp Lady Cardinals made their first showing in a state championship game at Goodman diamond in Madison. The stands were filled with red as fans, friends, and family cheered on their hometown heroes, the Thorp Lady Cardinals, as they took on the Southwestern Wildcats.

Once again situated at the top of the inning, Thorp was the first at bat. Taylor Stroinski opened with a single to right field and stole her way to second. A sacrifice by Jordan Chapman put Taylor in scoring position on third base, but two strike-outs by Southwestern's aggressive pitcher ended the journey there. Unfazed by the Wildcats' defense, Thorp simply took to the field and responded the only way they knew how—by stopping them in three at-bats with two caught pop-ups and one strikeout.

Ellie Zurakowski led off in the top of the second inning, sending a single over towards shortstop, but she was called out at second on an attempted steal. Lizzy Schimke hit a single to left field, which brought in Kasey Moskiewicz as the pinch runner. Kasey stole second and advanced to third as Kaitlyn Tyznik hit a single to right field.

A single by Megan Schesel earned her an RBI as Kasey scored. Ellie Windl came in as the pinch runner for Schesel and immediately stole second base. A single by Cassidy Stroinski to the far right side bought enough time for both Ellie and Kaitlyn to score. Taylor Stroinski kept the momentum going, hitting a single to center field and advanced to second on the throw, but two outs that followed her ended their chance at bat. But the damage had been done! Thorp took the 3-0 lead!

Two outfield outs and another strikeout by pitcher Schimke sent the Cards right back to bat! In the top of the third, Karley Kryzanski led off, but her pop-up was caught. Lyndsey Tyznik reached first on an error by the first baseman. The Wildcats got the second out on a ground ball, but Lizzy Schimke began filling the bases again as she reached first on an error and advanced to second. Before Kasey Moskiewicz could come in to finish the remaining length of the diamond, Lyndsey Tyznik advanced to third and then scored on a throwing error by the first baseman. A caught pop-up ended their at-bat, but the Cards had scored a single run to broaden their lead to 4-0.

In the bottom of the third, Lizzy Schimke struck out the first batter, but a single followed by an error put one Wildcat on third base. A single to right field brought in the single runner, but a caught fly ball earned the third out before any further damage was done.

The Cards were struggling with the first couple at-bats in the top of the fourth inning, facing two outs on a caught fly ball and a strikeout, but Taylor Stroinski waited out the tricky pitcher and walked her way to first. True to her form, Taylor stole second and stole again to third! A throwing error towards third base sent Coach Brad Ceranski in motion, giving Taylor the signal to finish the last leg of the diamond and run home! Taylor's aggressive running game earned Thorp one more run in the fourth inning before the Wildcats got the third out.

Southwestern was coming face to face with Thorp's aggressive pitching game from left-hand-

ed powerhouse, Lizzy Schimke in the bottom of the inning. The Cards earned two outs with the first two at-bats, but shortstop Claire Splinter made contact and hit a homerun well beyond the wall in left field. Lizzy quickly struck out the next at-bat, ending the inning with the score reading 5-2.

Heading into the fifth inning, the Wildcats opened with an out, but Lyndsey Tyznik soon made her way on to first on a walk and then ran to second on a passed ball. A single by Ellie Zurakowski pushed Lyndsey to third base. While Lizzy Schimke waited out the pitcher during her at-bat, Ellie stole second. Lizzy loaded the bases by walking her way onto first—bringing in Kasey Moskiewicz as her runner. Freshman Kaitlyn Tyznik hit a single on the first pitch, batting in her sister, Lyndsey. Even though Megan Schesel was called out on a fly ball, she earned an RBI on the hit, as Ellie Zurakowski scored before the Wildcats got the third out. With two more runs on the board, Thorp was sitting pretty with the score reading 7-2.

Thorp's defense quickly shut down the Wildcats in the bottom of the fifth, earning three outs on four at-bats. Back at bat, the unstoppable Taylor Stroinski led off with a single and advanced to second on a throwing error. A wild pitch gave Taylor a chance to get to third, putting her in prime scoring position. Jordan Chapman shot a single up the middle for the RBI as Taylor crossed home plate. Chapman advanced to second on the next at bat, and again to third. Ellie Zurakowski hit a single to left field, batting in Chapman. Lizzy Schimke followed with a single to left center, but no further runs were brought in after the third out was earned.

The Cardinals' defense held firm—leading 9-2—in the bottom of the sixth inning. While one runner earned a single, Lizzy Schimke's precision pitching earned three outs and three more strikeouts to her final count.

Seven strong has been the 2016 Thorp Lady Cardinals' motto for the year, and now was the time to put it to the test. The Cards went up to bat in the top of the seventh inning, still leading

the Wildcats 9-2. Two players made contact, but Southwestern needed to keep the margin as small as possible, catching the fly ball, getting the out at first, and one strikeout.

This was it. The Cardinals took to the field—only three outs away from making history and becoming the first Lady Cardinals' softball team to bring home a gold ball from the state tournament. The first two at-bats were out as the Cards tossed the scooped up ground balls to first base. The next three at-bats singled, loading the bases—but the Cards were only one out away from clinching the victory. The crowd held their breath as the next Wildcat made contact on a pitch down the center—sending the ball to left field. Freshman Kaitlyn Tyznik got herself into position, called the catch, and the ball landed square in her glove—sending the stands into a frenzy of excited cheers.

Thorp's girls swarmed together near the mound, hugging one another as excited tears trickled down their sun-soaked faces. Thorp had done it. They had reached every last goal they set for themselves: Learn from every game, play their best ball by the end, and to take home that gold trophy! Thorp beat out the Southwestern Wildcats with a final score of 9-2.

Leading hitters: Taylor Stroinski, 3 for 4; Ellie Zurakowski, 4 for 4; and Lizzy Schimke – 2 for 3.