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RAMSEUR - Eastern Randolph High School has a long, storied history when it comes to varsity softball. Very few teams around the state can equal the number of victories, conference titles and playoff success the Wildcats have enjoyed in the past few decades.

In order to experience that team success, there have been dozens of incredibly talented players who have donned the green of the Wildcats. Players who have earned all-state accolades, players who have gone on to incredible collegiate careers and players who have left an impression on Wildcats softball for all eternity.

So it's quite a compliment when head coach Lavette Graham says that this year's team features one of the top players he has ever coached. And she has another year to go after this season.



Eastern Randolph junior Addie Flinchum.



Addie Flinchum. Photo provided.

Junior Addie Flinchum, one of the most versatile and talented players Graham has seen in his long, successful coaching career, is having another stellar season for ER. That's nothing new. She has had two impressive seasons already.

"There are very few words that are that extraordinary to describe who Addie Flinchum is," Graham said as the Wildcats prepared for another busy week in the Piedmont Athletic Conference. "I have had several great players who have played for me and gone on to the next level and only two are at the level she is."

The other, Graham said, is Kella Goins, an incredibly gifted athlete who graduated in 2016.

"Addie is the only player who can play any position, except catcher, and be your best player on the field anywhere she

plays," Graham added. "You don't hear this in softball, but she would be a five-tool player. And she's so coachable."

Part of that is because her father, Trent Flinchum, has been helping Graham at ER for the past five seasons.

"She comes from the old school toughness," Graham said. "I treat her like a second kid of mine. Her dad is her biggest fan and her biggest critic. It just worked."

That it has. As a freshman, Flinchum hit .366 (15-for-41) with 21 runs scored, 12 RBIs, five doubles, one triple, one home run and eight stolen bases. In her sophomore year, she hit an incredible .520 (39-for-75) with 24 runs scored, 20 RBIs, five doubles, four triples, three home runs and 12 stolen bases.

This year, she has been even more remarkable. Entering play this week, she is hitting .605 (26-for-43) with 21 runs scored, 15 RBIs, six doubles, four triples, three home runs and 11 stolen bases.

For her high school career, that's a .503 batting average (80-159), 66 runs, 47 RBIs, 16 doubles, nine triples, seven home runs and 31 stolen bases.

A five-tool player indeed.

"There are a few players that I really don't want to go without and I will be the first one to say she is at the top of that list," Graham said. "It's very rare. She can play any position and hitting comes naturally for her because she has been blessed with so much talent."

The last three years have been fun, Flinchum said.

"It's been a great experience," Flinchum said. "All the girls have been fun to play with and we bond together well and we all go to work."

Of course, there has been a lot of work. Plenty of work and a hitting philosophy that has played out quite well for the 5-foot-10-inch Flinchum.

"It's really just see ball, hit ball," she said matter-of-factly. "You try to get into the right mindset and be ready for anything and take it as it goes."

Graham said he's liked what he has seen.

"She keeps it simple when it comes to batting," he said. "Hit it hard and whatever happens happens. When she gets two strikes, she just gets ready to hit the ball somewhere. A lot of kids try to over analyze how to approach everything. And they have a poor bat. She keeps it simple."



Wildcats outfielder, pitcher and slugger Addie Flinchum.

While her offensive talents have always been present, she has become an integral part of the Wildcats' pitching duties. A year after going 1-1 with a 5.73 ERA in 14 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings pitched, she has been as steady in the circle as she is at the plate. She is 2-1 with a 1.70 ERA, having given up just 18 hits in 33 innings pitched. She has walked 19 and fanned 62, giving her an even 100 strikeouts in her prep career.

"We changed up some mechanics and it has really helped her tremendously," Graham said. "She is doing what we thought she would be doing."

Relaxing is key.

"I don't put as near as much pressure on me as I did in previous years," Flinchum said. "Now it's just natural for me to go out and pitch the ball. I don't see outside the field. I have tunnel vision."

At the plate, in the field and in the circle. There aren't many players who can match what Flinchum has accomplished.