LEGENDS

The Vikings softball team has a historic season

They made school history. In the 27 years Waverly has had a softball program, only four teams have reached the state tournament.

In 2004, 2022 and 2023, those teams lost all six of their state games. 2025 was different.

On Oct. 10, 2025, the Vikings defeated Hastings twice in the B-6 District Championship, the second and third meetings between the teams that season. Senior **Blakely Meyers** anchored the team, driving key plays and rallying her teammates to victory.

"We all knew that it was all or nothing in that game," Meyers said.

For some of the girls, the game carried extra meaning. Some juniors and seniors had played on the 2022 and 2023 teams, while others, like sophomore **Tenly Peery**, who had sisters who lost on past teams.

"It was just really sad, because Tatum (Peery's older sister) and all the other girls had worked so hard," Peery said.

The first game was loaded with home runs. Waverly and Hastings each hit four, but sophomore **Reagan Glassburner**'s grand slam in the fifth inning gave the Vikings the momentum they needed to win 11-9.

"I remember seeing it clear the fence, and when I was rounding the bases, I just felt on top of the world. It was a big home run for our team, and I was thankful that it gave us the momentum to win," Glassburner said

The second game was anything but close. The Vikings dominated across the board, scoring seven runs in the fourth inning. Sophomore **Eva Tucker** was the star of the second game, hitting home runs in the third and fourth innings.

"I had nothing to lose. I wasn't doing very well in my at-bats before and knew that I just needed to change something," Tucker said.

At the end of the fourth inning, the Vikings were up 10-4. Going into the fifth inning, senior **Alexis Bivens** was in the circle pitching for the Vikings. Bivens was able to strike out the batter, putting the team two runs away from punching their ticket to state.

"I knew that we were okay even if they did score because I had faith that we would also be able to score more if we needed to," Bivens said.

Blakeley Meyers got on first with a hit to centerfield, bringing up senior **Jillian Hind**. On the third pitch of her at-bat, Hind hit a rocket to left-center field, landing her on third base and scoring Meyers.

"I remember thinking that Jill's hit was over the fence. Once I saw it bounce off the fence, I had to make it home," Meyers said.

Now on third, the pitcher threw a past ball, and Hind read it perfectly. In seconds, she crossed home plate with ease. With their twelfth run of the game, the Vikings were now headed to state.

"I just remember seeing the ball get by the catcher and telling myself I needed to get home ... I just felt such a rush of adrenaline because it was such a big moment for us," Hind said.

Five days later, on October 15th, the Vikings played their first game of the tournament against Skutt Catholic. In their regular-season game against the Skyhawks, the Vikings had lost after a walk-off home run, and in the circle for that game was freshman **Luci Thieman**. She would also pitch this game.

"I've learned throughout my softball career that I have to not let it affect me, especially so I don't pitch badly. I mean, obviously, there's nothing I can do if the girl just gets a good piece of the ball," Theiman said.

The game would end in favor of the Skyhawks, who run-ruled the Vikings 14-4 thanks to 15 hits, three of which were home runs. Thankfully, state softball is double-elimination, meaning a team has to lose twice to be knocked out. This meant the Vikings still had an opportunity to make program history.

"I just cleared my head and forgot everything that happened."

After a game between Beatrice and Hastings, it was decided that the Vikings would face Hastings for the fourth time that season in the loser's bracket. This game was the teams last chance at doing what no other Viking Softball team had: win a game at state. Starting in the circle again was Alexis Bivens.

"I was just reminding myself that I could do it, and even if they got hits off of me, my team would have my back," Bivens said.

Bivens dominated in the game against Hastings. Not just in the circle, but at the plate, too. Bivens went 3-3 and in the circle, she allowed only five hits and struck out four batters. All in just five innings.

"I just had all the confidence in the world that we were going to win, and I just did my best so my team could make history."

Now in the fifth inning, the Vikings were three outs away from run-ruling Hastings. The first batter grounded out, and after a solo shot to left field, the score was now 10-2, meaning if Hastings scored again, they would be safe from run rule for that inning.

"This home run specifically didn't really faze me because I knew we had the lead and that it would be okay. In the huddle, my teammates were just reminding me that it meant nothing and that we just needed to get the last few outs, and we were going to be okay."

Celebrating their win against Hastings, seniors **Alexis Bivens** and **Blakeley Meyers** embrace in a hug. The Viking win marked the program's first win at the state tournament. "It was a really big moment, especially for us seniors who have been working toward the goal of winning a game at state for our whole high school career. When I was hugging her, the main thing I remember saying was, 'We did it.' We had worked so hard for that moment, and it had finally come," Meyers said. *(Photo Credit: Charlee Schmidt)*

A pop fly to Blakeley Meyers in center field put the Vikings a single out away from program history. With the team being only one out away from winning, head coach **Luke Shepard** called time and made the choice to enter the four seniors who weren't already playing. With this, seniors **Maycie Grant**, **Taylor McBride**, **Ava Claussen**, and **Emma Beachler** were subbed in.

"These seniors have seen the program go to state two other times during their careers. I wanted them to be on the field when we won," Coach Shepard said.

Now that all seven seniors were on the field, Bivens resumed pitching. Bivens had already pitched 97 pitches throughout the course of the game. Fortunately for her, if she played her cards right, she would only need to throw a couple more.

"It felt really great, and it made me so happy getting to see all the other seniors out there with me."

The batter managed her way into a 3-2 count, putting everyone on the edge of their seats. All Bivens had to do was strike this girl out.

"I threw an outside change-up, which is usually my go-to pitch when I need a strikeout."

And it worked again. With the win against Hastings, over a dozen girls finally won their game at state after seeing the opportunity slip away two years prior. Later in the tournament, Jillian Hind would break the Viking single-season home run record with 16 home runs.

"Honestly, those last few at-bats were a blur. By the last one, I'd lost count and only realized I'd broken the record after Tenley told me," Hind said.

(Story by: Charlee Schmidt)

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