



COLBY FREE PRESS FILE PHOTO  
Colby's Cierra Rous touches home plate during a softball game last season as Brena Jones rounds third. Rous graduated but Jones is one of six returning varsity players this year. Colby High softball season starts Tuesday.

# Colby softball team eager to play more

By John Van Nostrand  
Colby Free Press Publisher

Colby High's softball season ended at the substate championship game against Thomas More Prep. This year, Colby wants to end someone else's season at the same game. "We really want to get over the hump and make it to state," said Colby coach Jack Elliott. That quest for state starts Tuesday when Colby plays Russell and Scott City at Scott City. Games start at 3 p.m. Six varsity starters return from last season, Lauren Cox, Ashley Barnes, Logan Wark, Kristin Cox and Brena Jones. Of those six, Wark returns as the only pitcher from last year. Colby was 14-9 last season. Despite the lack of experience, Elliott said he is confident what the girls who can pitch will do this year. "I'm pretty sure will be solid again. Logan did quite a bit last year, probably half the games," he said. New to the team this year, and probably to the starting rotation, is senior Brittany Kersenbrock. "She has pitched before," Elliott said. Elliott likes Barnes, a senior, who brings her leadership from playing on the state championship basket-

ball team. Elliott said a few other basketball players have joined the softball team. He hopes the success of the basketball team will bring more energy and enthusiasm to the softball team and qualify for state. What Elliott likes about the underclassmen is their experience. "Some younger kids, the sophomores and juniors coming up, is they have played summer ball. They have stepped up and helped." Either in high school softball or summer recreation leagues, Elliott said the time spent playing is always a benefit. "The kids have played summer ball should make us better with batting. But everybody has got a year under their belt. Elliott said it is still too early to determine a starting lineup. The coach expects Thomas More Prep, Goodland and Garden City to be tough again this year. Because of scheduling, Colby plays its first game just two days after returning from spring break. "That's tough to come back after break," he said, "and we let some time off from basketball." Softball practices during spring break have not been mandatory and about 15 players have showed up for practices. Elliott likes the commitment. "That's been nice," he said.

# Inside the games

**Associated Press**  
There will be at least two 1-2 matchups in the regional finals, the first time that has happened since 2002. In the West, top-seeded Kansas will face No. 2 UCLA for a berth in the Final Four, while in the South, No. 1 Ohio State will play Memphis. There could be a third 1-2 meeting as No. 1 North Carolina and No. 2 Georgetown both play Friday night in the East Regional semifinals. Top-seeded Florida is still alive in the Midwest, but No. 2 Wisconsin lost in the second round. Since the field expanded to 64 teams in 1985 there has never been three 1-2 matchups in the regional finals. There was one 1-2 matchup in 2003, 2004 and last year (Memphis-UCLA in the West). There were no such matchups in 2005.

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**FELLOW POWER:** Kansas coach Bill Self has to be happy the Jayhawks get to face a fellow power conference member in the West Regional final. The top-ranked Jayhawks advanced to the round of eight with a to-the-wire 61-58 victory over Southern Illinois on Thursday night. It shouldn't have been a surprise the Big 12 regular season and tournament champions struggled against a team from the Missouri Valley Conference, one of the leagues that lives under the shadow of the label "mid-major." The last two NCAA tournaments ended with first-round losses for Kansas. Last year, the Jayhawks lost 77-73 to Bradley, also of the Missouri Valley Conference. In 2005, Kansas lost 64-63 to Bucknell of the Patriot League. Kansas may have been held well below its season average of 79.5 points per game in the win over

# Jayhawks make it to Sweet 16, face UCLA

SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP) — The Kansas Jayhawks knew they had to abandon the beautiful game they usually play to beat Southern Illinois. The Jayhawks admit they don't like winning ugly — but they like losing even less. When the Salukis slowed their NCAA tournament run to a crawl, Brandon Rush and his Kansas teammates stooped down into the grit for a win that put them on the brink of the Final Four. Rush scored 12 points without missing a shot, and Kansas eked out a 61-58 victory over Southern Illinois in the West Regional semifinals Thursday night. Kansas advanced to face UCLA, a 64-55 winner over Pittsburgh, on Saturday.

Darrell Arthur and Russell Robinson scored nine points apiece to help the Jayhawks (33-4) barely avoid yet another Saluki surprise and another disappointing exit from the tournament. Kansas went into the locker room bickering and muttering at Southern Illinois' tenacity, yet still won its 14th straight game by nursing a small lead through the final minutes against a defense that made the Jayhawks' future NBA stars work exceptionally hard for every basket.

"It shows that we can win whatever the circumstances are," said Kansas guard Mario Chalmers, who scored just nine points. "Everyone knows we like an uptempo game in the 80s, but we can take our time and slow it down with the best of them, too." When Tony Young missed a desperate 3-point attempt from half-court at the buzzer, Kansas dodged its second straight tournament loss at the hands of the Missouri Valley Conference, which takes the "mid"

out of mid-major with each passing year. Bradley beat the Jayhawks last season. Southern Illinois decisively won the matchup's clash of styles, forcing a deliberate tempo on the high-flying Jayhawks while keeping the possessions long and the score low. The Salukis' defensive aggression and offensive rebounding were complemented by just enough big shots from its struggling scorers to keep it close.

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