KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press Colby High freshman Macey Page chopped a foul ball down the first baseline during the junior varsity softball team's game against Hays on Tuesday.

Diligent practice finally pays off for Royals hitter

By Doug Tucker

AP Sports Writer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. - Why it took so long for Kansas City's can't-miss kid to quit missing is anybody's guess.

Also unknown is exactly what the lean, laconic Nebraskan did to himself over to Seitzer. The two cure his ailing swing during long had worked well together the preand intense sessions last winter with batting coach Kevin Seitzer.

What is plain for everybody to see about Alex Gordon is the .354 batting average and 15-game hitting streak he'll take into Friday night's game at Texas.

Finally, after enough problems did a month of solid drills." and frustrations to last an entire career, Gordon may be starting to only 10 regular swings every 45 fulfill the vast promise everyone minutes for four days a week. saw in the overall No. 2 selection from the famous draft of 2005.

"One thing to his credit is he's never felt pressure from outside," said Seitzer. "All the pressure was what he put on himself."

Another open question is whether Gordon's sizzle will ultimately fizzle. It is, after all, a long season. And if Gordon's learned anything since starring at Nebraska as the college player of the year, it is that baseball at the highest level is as tough to predict as to play.

"It's early," he said, politely declining to speak in detail about his hot start.

Gordon has played about as well as anyone in the major leagues so far this season, both at the plate and in the field. In a 3-2 win Thursday night over Cleveland, he had a double in three at-bats and made an outstanding play from left field, third.

In a 5-4 victory over the Indians on Tuesday night, he had a signature game, collecting two hits with a run scored and an RBI, stealing two bases and making two great his swing completely and that plays in left. He threw out a runner at the plate and, helping thwart a Cleveland rally, made a diving catch of Sizemore's sinking liner

"He had a phenomenal night. He did it all," said manager Ned Yost, who has made Gordon his No. 3 hitter.

Gordon was supposed to be playing like this all along. But 2005 – guys like Troy Tulowitzki, Ryan Braun and Ryan Zimmerman – have rocketed into stardom, Gordon has struggled.

third base to left field and returned to the minors.

final stages of a failed career, to get that to come out."

doomed to go down as one of those supposedly surefire prospects who flames out and is never heard from again. He hadn't played in the outfield since his freshman year in high school.

And so with a mediocre career average of .244, Gordon turned vious year but a hip injury slowed Gordon's progress.

Early last December, they went

"I basically wanted him to forget his old swing, what it felt like," said Seitzer. "And we started. We

Gordon was allowed to take

"I didn't let him start hitting normal until January," said Seitzer. "All we did was drill work to loosen up his upper body and change his swing path to where he was more inside, on and through the ball instead of getting in and out, getting tight. That was the biggest thing.

One rap on Gordon had been that he did not always take instruction easily.

"He said, 'I'll do anything you tell me," recalled Seitzer. "And he did. He goes, 'When can I swing normal?' I said, 'I don't want you to remember what normal is. It's going to be a while."

As Christmas approached, Seitzer sensed his pupil was getting restless.

"He goes, 'Nope. I'm not. I'll do them as long as you tell me to," the coach said. "He comthrowing out Grady Sizemore at pletely turned himself over. He didn't ask questions. He didn't want to know why. He understood we were changing things and he just did what I told him.'

Gordon said he did not change most of the adjustments were

"The only thing with my swing is I'm getting ready a lot earlier,' he said. "So I'm on time with everything, ready to hit. So if you're throwing me a fastball, I'm ready to hit it. I'm never late or anything like that, never caught in

Seitzer refuses to elaborate on while others taken behind him in the drills and exercises he put Gordon through, equating it to a safely guarded recipe.

"Explaining it wouldn't make any sense. It would have to be Finally, plagued by injury and a thing you'd see on video and hounded by ineffectiveness, he I wouldn't put it on video bewas told last year to move from cause that's what we do," he said. "That's our secret sauce. It's easy to talk about what a hitter needs It looked for all the world as to do and the mechanics. But the though Gordon was entering the secret sauce is using drills in order

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Colby takes hard losses against tough Hays teams

The Colby High varsity softball team fell to 9-3 for the season with two close losses to Hays on Tuesday at the Colby recreation fields.

Senior Skyler Mengel started game one. She allowed 7 runs on 8 hits, but gave up no walks and struck out two. Sophomore Kenzie Curry relieved her in the fourth inning. She struck out 9 batters, allowed two more runs on two hits and a walk.

On offense, senior Caitlyn Wark and junior Lacy O'Neal both went 2-for-4, hitting a double and a single and driving in 2 runs each. Curry and senior Brittany Bange each had a double. Mengel, senior Tera Raymond and junior Madison Gawith each had singles.

The girls came within 1, but lost 9-8 after seven innings.

Curry pitched the entire second game. She going down 0-10 and 0-26. struck out 12 more batters, but gave up 8 runs on 7 hits and a walk.

O'Neal hit a home run and a single, getting 3 runs batted in. Sophomore Karly Kriss hit a double and a single. Sophomore McKenna Ortner came in for one at bat and got a base hit and a run batted in. Mengel, Wark, Raymond, Curry, Bange, Gawith and senior Bailey Koerperich each got base hits.

"Our offense kept up in both games," said coach Jack Elliot, "but our defense gave them too many extra outs to overcome. Our pitching was decent, but it still needs to get in better shape and locate the ball better.'

On the junior varsity diamond, the Lady Eagles suffered their worst losses of the season,

In game one, sophomore Bailey Terrell took the loss. She struck out 3 batters. Sophomore Alexa Schindler got a double. Sophomore Jenessa Williams, freshman Andrea Barton and Macey Page each hit singles.

In game two, freshman Madison Rogers picked up the loss. Freshman Paige Armbruster hit a single.

"I was disappointed in our lack of focus on offense and defense," said coach Kathy Elliot. Elliot said the team worked the rest of the week on refocusing.

The junior varsity team will travel to Hoisington on Monday. Both teams will play in a make-up game on Tuesday in Hugoton.

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