

# TIGERS IN THE NEWS

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## Conditioning, confidence boost Klein Collins softball team



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It didn't have anything to do with hitting or pitching, but an offseason "Boot Camp" proved to make a big impact on the Klein Collins High softball team.

"It was everything the team needs," KC senior first baseman Elissa Heaton said. "Strength, speed and thinking."

Lady Tigers assistant softball coach Audra Troutman organized a Boot Camp for the team to build strength, endurance and perhaps most importantly, teamwork.

Klein Collins High junior pitcher Taylor Atkinson struck out seven batters in a 5-1

During the past two seasons, Klein Collins barely missed the playoffs. In 2009, they lost to Tomball on the final day of the regular season.

Last season, they lost a playoff tiebreaker game to Klein Oak.

Klein Collins (21-5, 8-2) won't have to worry about any close calls this season. They clinched a playoff spot last week, along with defending state runner-up/Class 5A-District 13 leader Tomball (10-0) and Klein Oak (9-1). Klein (5-5) leads Spring (3-7) for the district's fourth and final playoff spot with four games remaining. Heaton and senior shortstop Marlee Maples, a Missouri-Kansas City signee, are four-year varsity players who will compete in the playoffs for the first time this spring.

"We're more of a team this year," Heaton said. "We all know we're good, and we're sick of barely missing playoffs." The Lady Tigers aren't satisfied with simply qualifying for the playoffs, and the team has the potential to enjoy playoff success. They'll challenge Tomball on Tuesday at THS; on March 11, the Lady Cougars jumped out to an 11-0 lead, before Collins scored eight runs in an 11-8 loss.

KC won the Cy-Fair Tournament and finished third in both the Katy Tournament and Klein Tournament this season.

"We back each other up, and we support each other," said Maples, who will join former Cy Woods standout Katie Franks at UMKC next season. "

Klein Collins third-year coach Rosemary Rhodes, who guided Angleton to a state title in 1994, said the team has been successful on both sides of the plate this season.

They'll miss the leadership and skills of Heaton and Maples, but all of the other players return next season, including junior pitchers Taylor Atkinson and Taylor Grissom, junior catcher Jessica Borrego, junior third baseman Angelica Gonzales, junior outfielder Laura Lopez and sophomore designated hitter December Rivers.

"We've started off real strong," Rhodes said. "Our hitting kept us in ballgames, and defensively, they've played sound. Our pitching's come through."

