

## MERRILLVILLE WINS SOFTBALL STATE TITLE

In a spectacular championship pitching duel between Carmel's Jenny Kniptash and Merrillville's Leslie Malerich, Merrillville pushed across a run in the fifth inning and went on to capture the state championship 1-0 over the Greyhounds June 21, 1997 at the Cherry Tree Softball Complex in Carmel.

Merrillville scored its only run in the fifth inning when Beth Zak led off with the Pirates' only hit, a single to right field. Kelly Preuss came in to pinch-run for Zak and moved to second on Deanna Goodman's sacrifice. After two outs, Chrissy Dickerson belted a liner that caromed off the center fielder's glove and brought Preuss in to score the game's only run.

It was the second state championship for Merrillville, which also won in 1993. Both teams were coached by Bob Bergeson. The 1997 Pirates finished 27-7. Carmel, which entered the state tournament series ranked No. 1 by the state coaches poll, was seeking to become the first undefeated state champion. The Greyhounds, coached by Linda Mason, finished 32-1.

Carmel had advanced to the championship game by defeating Boonville 5-1 in the semifinals as Kniptash delivered 14 strikeouts, two short of the state finals record. Merrillville followed with a 4-1 triumph over Fort Wayne Northrop as Malerich fanned 12 batters and was 3-for-3 with an RBI at the plate.

Carolina Procter, the starting right fielder for Merrillville, was selected by the IHSAA Executive Committee as the 1997 recipient of the Mental Attitude Award in Softball. Farm Bureau Insurance, the corporate partner of the IHSAA, presented a \$1,000 scholarship in Procter's name to Merrillville High School.

A field of 331 teams began tournament play at the sectional level.

## STATE CHAMPIONSHIP BOX

Carmel (0)	Merrillville (1)
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	AB	R	H	RBI		AB	R	H	RBI
Jenny Kniptash, p	3	0	0	0	Tina Owen, c	3	0	0	0
Breanne Berger, lf	3	0	0	0	Sarah Frink, lf	3	0	0	0
Millie Albright, ss	3	0	0	0	Carolina Procter, rf	3	0	0	0
Katy Rusnak, 1b	3	0	0	0	Leslie Malerich, p	2	0	0	0
Katy Berger, c	1	0	0	0	Beth Zak, 2b	1	0	1	0
Michelle Wright, 3b	2	0	0	0	Deanna Goodman, cf	1	0	0	0
Erin Dittus, dh	2	0	1	0	Kris Burke, 3b	2	0	0	0
Chanda Hollingsworth, rf	0	0	0	0	Chrissy Dickerson, ss	2	0	0	0
Katie Ballard, 2b	2	0	0	0	Stacey Bish, 1b	2	0	0	0
Danielle Gross, cf	2	0	0	0	Kelly Preuss, pr	0	1	0	0

Haley Ruxer, pr            0    0    0    0  
**Totals**                    21   0    1    0

Chrissy Hernandez, pr    0    0    0    0  
**Totals**                    19   1    1    0

									<b>R</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>E</b>
Carmel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	0	1	1
Merrillville	0	0	0	0	1	0	x	-	1	1	0

E -- Gross. LOB -- Carmel 1, Merrillville 2. Umpires -- Julie Johnson (Home Plate), Glenn Crocker (First Base), Shirley Dunn (Third Base), Michael Pannell (Left Field), James Lough (Right Field). Time of Game -- 1:26.

### Pitching Summary

	<b>IP</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>ER</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>BB</b>	<b>SO</b>
Malerich (W 25-4)	7	0	0	1	1	9
Kniptash (L 21-1)	6	1	0	1	1	8