

# PREP SOFTBALL: Bath's Ford perfect in win over Holston

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DAMASCUS, Va. – Unfortunately for host Holston, its normally rock-solid defense was far from perfect at Damascus Middle School on Friday evening.

Bath County starter **Jailyn Ford**, meanwhile, was on the other end of the perfection spectrum.

With a determined mindset that probably dispelled recent sickness over the last two weeks, **Ford** struck out 13 Cavalier batters en route to a jaw-dropping perfect game and another Region C tournament crown thanks to a 4-0 decision.

“Phenomenal,” beamed Bath County coach Lisa Baugh, whose steady southpaw caught the final pop-up from Holston’s Morgan Lowe to set off a wild Charger celebration. “She really wanted to win this one.”

The Chargers, who will host their second straight Group A quarterfinal contest, welcome Region D runner-up Virginia High to their confines next Tuesday. The Bearcats lost 5-1 to Coeburn in 10 innings Friday.

**Ford, who equaled a Virginia High School League record with three consecutive no-hitters earlier this season**, baffled the Cavalier batters – allowing just eight successful in-play contact swings. All of those Holston attempts stayed in the infield, including three seventh-inning pop-ups.

**Having already posted a perfect game and three more no-nos during her freshman year, Ford – who threw an astonishing 87.8 percent (72 of 82) of her pitches for strikes Friday** – has made the Chargers (20-3) synonymous with excellence.

“That ball coming off her left hand is very difficult to pick up, and it’s very different to see,” said Holston coach Lisa Blackburn. “The girls were trying to adjust to that different look, and we weren’t able to get our bats going.”

**In fact, no one really had to remind Ford about her perfection re-runs. With so many stellar twirls in the circle, it’s more about the overall team focus rather than superstitious tip-toeing.**

“I actually forgot that it was a perfect game,” admitted Bath County catcher Amanda Shifflett, whose hustling leadoff triple in the second sparked a defining four-spot. “I was more worried about getting runs. I did think about it during the seventh though.”

**Ford**, however, looked as calm as ever entering the final frame, needing just eight pitches to retire the Holston side in order for the seventh straight time.

“I didn’t feel any different in warm-ups,” said the sophomore. “I just think we came together as a team, plus everybody backed each other up out there. It takes more than one.”

For Holston, it took three errors to blow open the second – even with starter Lowe recording a rare four-strikeout frame. All three miscues occurred in the infield, and the Cavaliers – despite receiving 16 strikeouts and a two-hitter from Lowe – never recovered.

But with heartache comes reprieve. The Cavaliers (22-2) will look to erase Friday’s result with what they hope will be a successful road trip Tuesday against the Region D champion Blue Knights.

“We’re still playing,” Blackburn said. “We’re excited for next week. Every game you learn something. Every game means something. Playing a good team just makes you better, so hopefully, we’ll take what we’ve learned into next week and see what we can do there.”