Del Norte Triplicate

SPORTS

History-making Del Norte girls enjoy breakthrough championship

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The Del Norte Warriors recently enjoyed a history-making 48 hours on the softball field.

After clinching their second straight Big 5 conference title with a doubleheader sweep over Arcata on May 8, just two days later they won a first-ever Charles Lakin H-DNL postseason tournament in Arcata to cap a hectic few days for the team.

The Warriors defeated three-time Charles Lakin tournament champions Fortuna 8-4 in the championship game.

“They are excited,” first-year Del Norte head coach Aaron Healy said of his players afterwards. “This is a happy moment for these young ladies. They worked hard for this. We’ve had some injuries, but the girls stepped in and got the job done.”

The Warriors secured the Big 5 title with two 10-0 wins over Arcata in Crescent City and they closed out the Big 5 with a record of 10-2, two wins more than any other school.

However they had to battle all the way in the Lakin tournament championship game.

After storming out to an early 6-0 lead, a determined Del Norte team appeared to be cruising to victory.

But the Huskies rallied to score four runs in the top of the sixth inning to pull with two and the momentum appeared to have shifted.

With an historic championship on the line, however, the Warriors dug deep and responded in the spirit of true champions.

They would add a pair of insurance runs in the bottom half of the sixth and they closed out the game in emphatic fashion with a three-up, three-down seventh to seal the win.

“We got in a little trouble in the sixth, but it was kind of nice the way we came back after that,” Healy said.

There is so much to like about this year’s Del Norte team, including the very effective one-two pitching rotation of senior McKenna Curtis and junior Shay Nolan, each of whom shared the workload in the circle and each of whom enjoyed big seasons.

So too did junior catcher Carlee Harper, who played at an MVP level in conference and grew stronger as the season went on, making big plays behind the plate, at the plate and on the bases.

Audrey Phillips at first base and Tsinte Steinruck at third also gave their team a pair of reliable gloves at either corner of the infield and they both rose to the occasion, as did Madison Calleja, who was thrust into the starting lineup when senior standout center fielder Reece White — another key player on this year’s team — suffered what appeared to be a season-ending injury in the conference-clinching doubleheader against Arcata.

“I’m pretty proud of the whole team,” Healy said. “They all stepped up and came together. I think we’re peaking at the right time. Overall, they’re starting to play very well together.”

And that’s not all that caught the attention of Healy.

“(What’s impressed me is) just their determination,” he said. “They don’t give up. There’s a lot of not letting things bother them and moving on and knowing the next at-bat is the most important.”

The celebrations began immediately following the final out.

“They’re floating on air,” Healy added of his players after the win. “It was like the weight was lifted off their shoulders and they finally got over the hump.”

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