Del Norte Triplicate

SPORTS

Del Norte girls keep title hopes on track with doubleheader split at Fortuna

April 22, 2025









After losing the first game of a key softball doubleheader at Fortuna on Saturday, the Del Norte Warriors answered emphatically with a big win in game two to keep their hopes of a third straight Big 5 championship on track.

The two-time defending conference champs lost the opener 8-7 in a back-and-forth game against a team that is considered to be their biggest challengers for this year’s title.

But they came out fired up in game two and scored six runs in the top of the first inning on the way to a comfortable 12-1 win in five innings.

The split followed a doubleheader sweep at Arcata the previous weekend by scores of 15-4 and 10-1.

The Del Norte girls, who also won a non-conference game at Brookings-Harbor 17-3 on Friday, improved to 3-1 in the Big 5 and 11-2 overall.

After a disappointing start to the day at Fortuna, the Warriors turned in a much better performance in game two.

And with senior pitcher Shay Nolan once again in commanding form in the circle, and the offense giving her plenty of support, that was more than enough to see them over the line.

The bats came out of the starting gates on fire in game two, with three home runs in the opening two innings, including two by standout senior Khloe Smith.

The team's starting shortstop missed most of last season through injury, but is back better than ever this spring and her influence is being felt in many ways.

"There's nothing better than Khloe at 100 percent," Del Norte head coach Aaron Healy said of the inspirational team standout after the doubleheader sweep at Arcata. "She's smooth and she does her job, and she hit the ball well today. She had a very complete two games."

She followed that with another big day at Fortuna, hitting a two-run home run in the top of the first and adding a three-run blast an inning later.

Freshman Addi Whitford, who has quickly established herself as a key part of this year's team, also had a grand slam in the top of the first inning.

The game-two performance was a nice response from the players, who played well in all aspects of the game.

"We pride ourselves on our defense, but our defense let us down (in game one)," Healy said. "With a pitcher that gets a lot of ground outs and fly balls we can't make errors."

Game two was a different story.

"We ran the bases better, we were patient at the plate — we didn't chase balls as much — and my defense showed up," Healy said. "When we have the whole package, we're hard to beat."

Nolan, as usual, played a big part in that.

"I thought Shay did a fantastic job in the circle," Healy added of the team ace. "She's moving the ball around in the strike zone and getting ground outs and fly balls. She's really doing a good job."

The Warriors scored runs in all five innings while holding their hosts scoreless until the bottom of the fifth and final inning.

The Del Norte outfield trio of Tayler Starkey, Bliss Blackburn and Bella Arriola all impressed on defense and "all made some nice catches and did their job very well," according to their coach.

The two schools, who are both living up to their billing as the favorites in this year's Big 5, will play a third time in Crescent City on April 30, in a showdown that will likely decide this year's championship.

With Saturday's split, the Huskies maintained a slender advantage in the conference standings and improved to 4-1 in the Big 5 having played one game more than the Warriors.

The Del Norte girls also won two important games at Arcata in their conference openers the previous weekend with several players on a senior-heavy lineup opening the Big 5 with impressive performances.

Nolan got both wins in the circle and worked well with senior catcher Carlee Harper, who was conference MVP a year ago and is playing at a very high level once again this spring.

"Shay pitched very well in the circle," Healy said after those two wins. "She figures things out, her and Carlee behind the plate. They work well together."

Nolan also showcased her power on offense and hit a three-run home run in game one.

The Warriors will continue conference play with two home games against Eureka on Saturday.

https://triplicate.com/sports/2a05cb88-b993-4d85-af94-74f086946dba Printed November 3, 2026 · © Del Norte Triplicate