Del Norte Triplicate

SPORTS

Seven Del Norte girls receive all-conference recognition

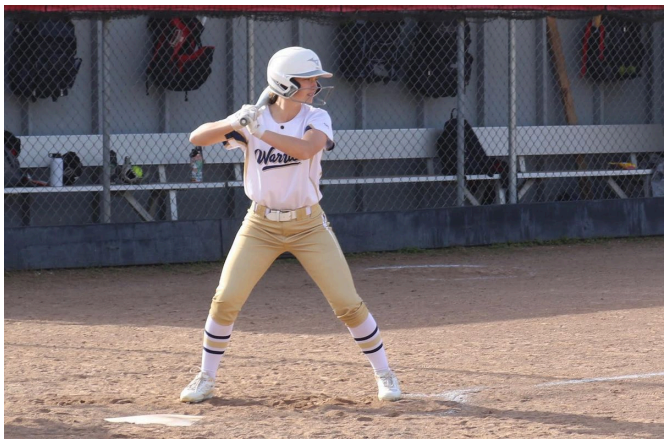
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After clinching a third straight Big 5 championship in softball this spring, the Del Norte Warriors were well represented on the 2025 all-conference team.

Head coach Aaron Healy's title winning squad had seven starters receive all-conference recognition, including five first-team selections and two honorable mentions.

Leading the way was Big 5 MVP Shay Nolan, who was outstanding in the circle all season and helped set the tone for her teammates with her play and the approach she brought to every game.

Fondly referred to by her teammates and coaches as a "bulldog" because of the way she battles in every game and never backs down from the challenge, Nolan played a crucial role on the way to this year's championship and the Warriors were a different team without her in the circle.

"It's not necessarily for what she did this year, but for what she's done all three years," Healy said of the MVP award. "She just grew so much over the last three or four years."

She wasn't the only Del Norte player to impress this season.

Khloe Smith, Carlee Harper, Tsinte Steinruck and Bliss Blackburn each also were included on the all-conference team.

Smith enjoyed an outstanding season at shortstop and the senior appeared to relish every moment of the campaign after being sidelined for most of her junior season because of injury.

Healy believes she was a special shortstop and has often described her play as "smooth."

"She was unlike any other shortstop I've ever seen," the coach said. "Her arm strength, her range, her overall ability. She made a lot of plays other shortstops wouldn't make."

Smith, who will play at College of the Siskiyous next year, also made her presence felt at the plate and hit a very impressive .360.

Harper, who was the Big 5 MVP last year, also played a pivotal role on the march to the championship.

The senior catcher not only made it very difficult for opposing base runners to steal, but when she got on base she was almost impossible to stop and more often than not would find a way to score.

"I don't think anybody really ran on her this year," Healy said. "She just brought that fight to every game. She battled and she did a lot of things right."

Likewise with Steinruck, who held down third base and was one of the best team leaders in the entire H-DNL.

"She's one of those kids you're happy to have on the team," Healy said of the senior infielder, who also was recently included on the inaugural H-DNL All-Sportsmanship Team for her attitude, sportsmanship and leadership. "She shows up, she has a great attitude, and she has a work ethic second to nobody."

Steinruck also was a player who could easily put a mistake behind her and move on.

“That’s a quality you don’t find in many high school athletes,” the coach said.

Blackburn, meanwhile, also enjoyed a big spring with the team.

The junior standout was one of the best and most consistent outfielders in the H-DNL and also established herself as a reliable hitter this spring.

“She brings a great attitude, she brings a rock solid glove, and she made a lot of plays for us,” Healy said of the ever-reliable center fielder. “She was very crucial to our defense.”

Both Harper and Steinruck will continue to be teammates at College of the Redwoods next year, along with another Del Norte senior, Audrey Phillips, who received an all-conference honorable mention.

Phillips made some key plays at second base all spring and overcame some struggles at the plate to finish the season strong.

“She’s another kid you want to have on your team. She’s constantly working,” Healy said. “I think she made adjustments hitting wise and found herself at the end of the year.”

Del Norte right fielder Bella Arriola also received an all-conference honorable mention for her play in the outfield and at the plate.

“She battled,” Healy said of the junior standout, who hit .340. “She was another solid defensive player for us.”

But it wasn’t just her play that earned her the respect of the Big 5 coaches.

“She’s just itching to learn,” Healy said. “And she has the ability to apply it.”