Del Norte Triplicate

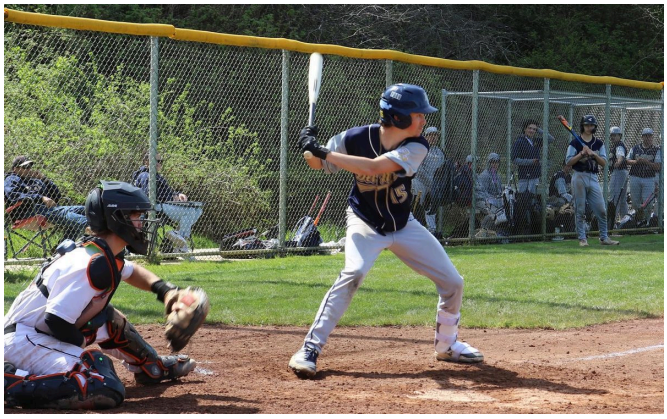
SPORTS

Daniels no-hitter highlights good day for Warriors in Big 5 openers

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The Del Norte Warriors enjoyed a good start to the Big 5 in both baseball and softball over the weekend, with each team sweeping a doubleheader at Arcata High.

Senior Preston Daniels showed why he is one of the most dangerous pitchers in the H-DNL and threw a complete-game five-inning no-hitter in game one of the baseball doubleheader, leading the Del Norte boys to a 17-0 win.

They followed that with a come-from-behind 13-10 win in a high-scoring game two.

“He went in there and he took care of business,” Del Norte head coach Jeff Cook said of the senior ace. “He was confident. He was ready to go. It was the first league game and he was pumped.”

The two wins stretched the Warriors’ unbeaten run to eight straight, and since a surprising early-season 5-4 loss at Hoopa the Del Norte boys have been the hottest team in the H-DNL.

Daniels got plenty of run support.

Del Norte's Marco Gonzalez led the way at the plate in game one and finished 3-for-4, while Aidan Rice went 2-for-3.

Game two was a different story.

The Warriors broke the game open with six runs in the top of the second and appeared to be cruising to another big win.

But the home team would grow into the game and battled back, taking a one-run lead heading into the seventh.

The Warriors dug deep late in the game and scored four runs in the final inning to complete the sweep.

"That's a great start (to the Big 5)," Cook said. "I thought we did a good job."

Rice was once again instrumental in the win in game two and finished 2-for-3, while teammate Anthony Cardenas walked seven times on the day and scored six runs on those free passes.

With the two wins, the Warriors improved to 8-4-1 overall.

The Del Norte girls were equally impressive in their conference openers.

The two-time defending conference champs appear to be the team to beat once again this spring and the weekend games seemed to back that belief.

They opened with a 15-4 victory and took game two 10-1.

The sweep stretched the team's winning streak to seven straight as the Warriors improved to 9-1 overall.

Several players in a senior-heavy lineup stepped up in both conference wins and they appear pumped up to win a third straight conference title.

None more so than pitcher Shay Nolan and catcher Carlee Harper, who was the Big 5 MVP in 2024.

Nolan pitched both wins and was in control for much of the two games, working well with Harper behind the plate.

Nolan also showcased her power on offense and hit a three-run home run in game one to set the tone for her teammates.

"Shay pitched very well in the circle," Del Norte head coach Aaron Healy said. "She figures things out, her and Carlee behind the plate. They work well together."

Several other Warriors also impressed the coach, including senior third baseman Tsinte Steinruck, who had three doubles on the day, as well as junior Bella Arriola, who hit a home run in game two.

After missing much of last season through injury, senior Khloe Smith is fully healthy this spring and her impact on defense is being felt while making the team even stronger this season.

“There’s nothing better than Khloe at 100 percent,” Healy said of the shortstop who also hit a couple of doubles at the plate. “She’s smooth and she does her job, and she hit the ball well today. She had a very complete two games.”

Junior outfielder Bliss Blackburn and freshman first baseman Addi Whitford also got the Big 5 off to impressive starts.

Blackburn played mostly just on defense last year but has quickly established herself as a legitimate threat at the plate as well this season and she had multiple hits over the two games, including a couple of doubles.

“She had a great day at the plate,” Healy said of the multi-sport standout, who also made some nice plays in center field, “She does a lot of things right.”

The Fortuna Huskies look like the biggest challengers to the Warriors for the Big 5 crown this season, although a dangerous McKinleyville Panthers team could also be in the mix, and the Del Norte girls will play both schools three times each in conference play.

The Del Norte girls travel to Fortuna for a pivotal doubleheader this weekend after the Huskies also began conference play strong with a doubleheader sweep over Eureka.

0-4 - Pitcher Landon Williams

0-6 - Team

0-7 - Preston daniels

0-9 - Aidan Rice

Girls

0-13 - team

0-5-1 - Shay Nolan pitching

0-6-1 - Third baseman Tsinte Steinruck and shortstop Khloe Smith