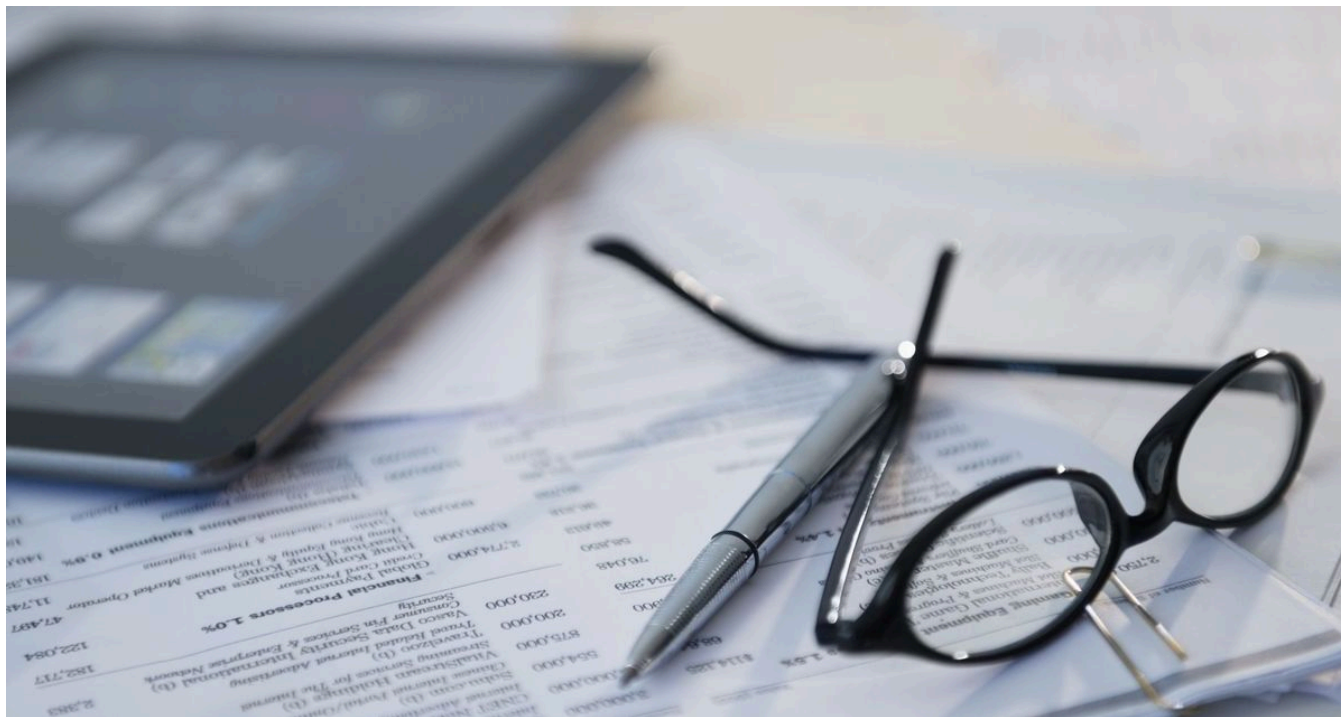


Del Norte 10-12 Softball All Stars knocked out of state

July 10, 2019



The Del Norte Major Softball All Stars run at the Oregon Little League State Championship came to a close on Sunday after two games.

Del Norte started the tournament off with a 9-2 loss against Pendleton. The Warriors bounced back and played better on Sunday against Redmond according to head coach Meagan Curtis, but they couldn't quite complete the comeback and ended up falling 3-2.

Although it was the third straight trip to the state tournament for most of the players on the Del Norte team, it was the first time competing in the 10-12 age division. Curtis said one of the things that stood out most to her was just how much softball some of the other teams have played.

"I have seen this in volleyball quite a bit and this was kind of my first experience with coaching a softball team this way, but you could definitely tell that the teams that we played had a lot more experience than we did," she said. "They have played a lot more softball than us. Their hitters have seen a lot more pitchers, and their defense has seen a lot more batters. Overall, I think that we had the talent to be there, but our lack of

experience and overall softball playing-time that we have accumulated was a lot lighter than the other teams that we saw.”

Del Norte got a difficult draw on Saturday, going up against a Pendleton team that Curtis said proved to be one of the top teams in Keizer, Oregon over the weekend.

“I really would not be surprised if they come out winning the state tournament,” Curtis said. “They were a very well put together and very talented team. They definitely hit the ball very well and they were very strong fundamentally. You could just tell by how they fielded the ball and how they got on and off the field that they have done it so many times that they knew what they were doing.”

Curtis said she thought Del Norte could have kept the game against Pendleton closer, but some nerves got the better of the Warriors in the first game of the tournament.

“We did not hit the ball very well in the first game,” Curtis said. “I think a lot of it was nerves. We weren’t swinging when we should have been swinging. The theme of the tournament seemed to be that we were hitting singles and the other team was hitting doubles. Pendleton actually didn’t have that many more hits than we did, they just had better hits than we did.

“We also had a couple baserunning errors that I chalk up to first-game jitters. We either didn’t slide when we should have, or we rounded the base when we needed to stay on the base. We just had a couple errors like that.”

After an opening round loss, Del Norte bounced back with a more fundamentally sound performance on Sunday.

“We told them after the first day that we had to be better with our baserunning and we had to do better swinging the bats,” Curtis said. “They did that on the second day. We had a time where somebody hit a single and we were able to capitalize on a couple throw-arounds and ended up on third base. So we had better heads up baserunning. We also swung the bat better —we didn’t stand there watching it. We just couldn’t get hits consistently.”

Redmond jumped out to a 3-1 lead in the game, but Del Norte managed to cut the lead in half with another run later in the game.

“It came down to our last at bat, basically,” Curtis said. “We needed to convert and get it tied up to force the bottom half of the sixth inning. We just weren’t able to get it done.”

Although Redmond was able to wrap up the win with three straight outs, Curtis said she was glad to see that each of her hitters were aggressive at the plate with the game on the line.

“We swung the bat all three times,” she said. “The first hit was just enough into the left fielders reach for an out, but she was running and stretching for it. Then we had a strike out swinging. The last batter made good contact, but Redmond defensively executed what they needed to do to get us out.”

The loss on Sunday ended the postseason run for the 10-12 All Stars. After three straight years with mostly the same players competing in the Oregon State Tournament together — first in the 8-10 division, then the 9-11 division before this year's tournament — the future of this group is a little bit uncertain.

“A little bit more than half of the team is actually eligible to play in the same division next year,” Curtis said. “We have six players who are league-age 12, which means that they will be moving up a division next year. Right now we don't know, and we probably won't know until we do sign ups next year, if there will be enough girls to have a junior division. We don't know if these girls who could play majors again would want to move up a division.”

No matter what happens, Curtis said the players will need to find a way to get back on a softball diamond next summer if they want to close the gap in playing experience that they saw in Keizer over the weekend.

“I do know that we have to have some kind of division or travel team for this group to play in,” Curtis said. “We didn't have enough players for the girls who were league-age 13 this year and that means that those kids who were part of our program last year basically sat out for a year and they are about to go to high school. We want to keep playing. The only way to battle us not having enough playing experience is to keep playing.”

After making a run to the championship game last summer Curtis said being eliminated after two games was disappointing, but it was still an honor to compete at the Oregon State Tournament.

“I think the kids had a good time,” she said. “It is always a neat experience to be able to qualify and go up to that tournament. There were seven teams up there representing the finals for the state of Oregon. So to be one of those teams shows that we should be there. I think we were on the level to compete, we just came across two good teams... But one of the girls made a good point. She said, ‘We did make it further than the Wildfire team this year.’”

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Meagan Curtis

has run into this

second game lost 3-2 to Redmond

“They were not as talented as the Pendleton team, but they were aggressive at the plate. The hits that they got were mostly hit to gaps in the outfield, or balls that I thought we should have gotten to in the outfield.”

“Most of our hits were singles again. Our baserunning was better in that game though.”

hit a single and managed to get to third base with the defense throwing the ball around.

“Our baserunning was better.

“I think one more base hit in that game for us would have been a tie ballgame, and potentially force an extra inning if we had held them in the bottom of the sixth.”

fly ball, strike out, then infield ground ball for a put out.

after the tournament.

“I told them that I could tell that these teams have played a lot more softball than they had, and they had spent a lot more time together as well. It is very different to spend a season playing against the same teams over and over again. If you look at these girls, the majority of the girls on this team have played in the state tournament, which is a handful of games each time through. This year was the first time that we had some district games to play, but we really were not tested in our district games. So as a group, playing together, they have not played as much.”

“When these girls were 7 to 9 years old the bulk of them were not playing in a division where they were pitching at each other, or seeing a live pitcher. Now my youngest daughter is in that division — we have that division now. So their growing up in softball is a lot different from the kids that we are seeing from other areas who have played travel ball, who have had more time together, and who have had more time working on their skills.”

“This was their first time experiencing really getting behind in a game, and having to come back. That was a little harder.”

“It has been a long grind. A lot of the other teams had their district tournament a week after us. I could tell in our last week of practice they were getting kind of tired and it was grinding on them. It’s hard having that much time of just practice without playing.”

“We were probably better off playing a week ago than this last week.”

“At this age these kids have a lot going on in their lives — summer time is pretty important.”

maybe travel ball

“Ultimately these girls are going to be playing together in high school for many years, so our goal is to get them experience, keep them playing, and try to broaden their horizons a little bit when it comes to softball.”

“It was a little bit disappointing to work that hard and go up there. I think the kids had a good time though. It is always a neat experience to be able to qualify and go up to that tournament. There were seven teams up there representing the finals for the state of Oregon. So to be one of those teams shows that we should be there. I think we were on the level to compete, we just came across two good teams. But one of the girls made a good point. She said, ‘We did make it further than the Wildfire team this year.’”

first game lost 9-2 to Pendleton

“They definitely hit the ball into the outfield quite a bit. I thought that there were a couple balls in the outfield that we probably could have gotten, but a lot of the time they were hitting into gaps and they were

just really good hits. Our pitchers were throwing strikes, and they were hitting the ball.”

“When the ball got hit to the infield we made some nice place, which was good to see.”

“We didn’t have an inning where they just blasted all the way through their lineup, or anything like that. They just consistently came out and scored runs in each inning.”

middle of the game Del Norte scored a couple runs.

“We had to get runners on base before we could do anything with them. We finally got a couple kids over to third and were able to score them for some runs.”

“They just consistently swung the bats and got hits in every single inning.”

last couple innings were able to hold Pendelton’s offense at bay

“We just couldn’t get enough bats going. They were throwing strikes too. I don’t think it was anything faster than what we have seen. We just weren’t executing at the plate.”

“I think we probably should have had a better showing against Pendleton, but we would have had to be our best in all fields to be able to win that game.”