

Menace Morphs into One of the Area's Top Teams

Submitted by Pat Mason

In only its third year, the 2007 Lamorinda Menace 12U traveling tournament softball team became one of the East Bay's dominant teams.

The Menace enjoyed a fantastic summer, playing teams from all over Northern California in four Bay Area tournaments and one in Tahoe. Unlike softball teams that play year-round made up of players with no geographical boundaries, summer teams like the Lamorinda Menace consist of local "rec league" players primarily from Joaquin Moraga and Stanley middle schools, with all the girls proudly hailing from LMYA's spring softball league.

In 2007, the Menace not only dominated opponents within their division of teams drawn from small leagues such as LMYA, but they competed well in the "open division," where they often beat teams selected from literally hundreds of girls. In their 14 games against division teams, the Menace outscored those opponents 120-61, on the way to one outright tournament championship and another consolation title. In two "open division" tournaments, the Menace advanced far

into the semi-finals both times.

Opposing batters were kept off-balance by the Menace's pitching "dynamic duo" of fireballer Natalie Goepel and crafty Rebecca Crisp. For all three years, Goepel has been the Menace workhorse; this year Crisp contributed with some huge innings in critical games.

On offense, the Menace amassed 177 runs in 25 total games, led by the region's best power-hitting combo of Siena Del Ponte and Kat Mathis. Del Ponte hit for a .548 average, including 16 extra base hits; Mathis was an even tougher out, batting at a .606 clip, while belting 4 home runs. Grace Lovell (.481 average) and Emily Streeter (.429) provided similar supporting power. Other Menace provided great balance in the lineup -- creative bats who specialized in finding ways to get on base ahead of those power hitters, and also move runners along: Audrey Vogel (.425 ave), speedy Brenna Williams (.381 ave), Sam Flower (.464 obo), Crisp (.439 obo), Tela Zembsch (.395 obo), Jackie Welland (.372 obo) and Goepel (12 runs scored).



Menace pitcher Becca Crisp begins her windup, while teammates Tela Zembsch (2d base) and Brenna Williams (right field) get ready on defense

Photo provided

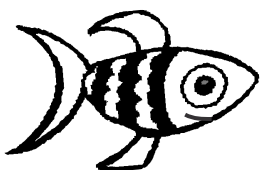
Defensively, the Menace made huge strides this year, one of the main reasons for their meteoric rise. Mathis was phenomenal behind the plate, not only as a top-notch receiver, but as the summer progressed erstwhile base-stealers simply stopped challenging her arm. Lovell (1b), Crisp (2b), Del Ponte (ss), and Flower (3b) did their part to limit opponents to the Menace mantra of "just three outs, and only one base at a time."

Williams, Vogel, Streeter, Welland and Zembsch helped out in the infield, and also saved several games with great play in the outfield. The Menace also got important help from Sarah Reynolds,

Rachel Kelley, Sarah Chesbrough and Kalena Alva, each contributing to the Menace's winning season.

Spurred on by their rapid improvement, the Menace players were successful in lobbying their coaches and parents to continue playing -- as a result, the Menace will play three more "fall ball" tournaments through October. The Menace extend their deep gratitude to the Saint Mary's College coaches and players who have been so instrumental in the success of the Menace: Jessica Haneseth, Staci Hamaguchi, Lauren Mello, Sadie Dolcini and Lauren Gardner.

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