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Acalanes Softball Hopes to Make its Mark in NCS Quarterfinals

By Karl Buscheck



Mary Keeler



Alex Grant-Hudd

Even though star shortstop Zoe Marrott never played a single inning, the Acalanes softball team managed to advance to the NCS division III quarterfinals.

"The day she got hurt on the field – it was a practice – and it was just like the whole team was quiet," said head coach Victor Silva, recalling the scene after Marrott tore her shoulder. "And it took them a couple of days to recover. Everyone was just so down."

After earning the No. 11 seed in the NCS bracket, the Dons (9-11 overall and 4-8 in league), topped No. 6 Sonoma Valley 13-8 on the road on May 24. The playoff push – minus Marrott who's headed to Cal on a full scholarship next fall – ended three days later when the team was shutout 13-0 by Analy in Sebastopol.

"It seemed like every time we won, it was someone different stepping up," Silva explained. "It was a team effort and I don't think I've ever had so much fun. The girls all got along and they all had a great time playing softball."

During the run to the postseason, a trio of senior co-stars emerged for the Dons – including Mary Keeler who shifted from center field to cover the vacancy at shortstop.

"Alex Grant-Hudd was the MVP for us for the whole year," Silva said. "But we also couldn't have done it without Mary Keeler and Kaitlyn Johnson."

While the Dons' roster was loaded with veterans, the Cougars trotted out one of the most youthful squads in DFAL.

"We had a very young team," said Campolindo head coach Wayne Stephens, who had just one senior and three juniors to call on. "So, next year we're going to have a much more seasoned team."

While the lack of upperclassmen resulted in an 8-15 mark overall and a 0-12 record in league, Stephens said there are still positives to take away from challenging campaign.

"It gave us the ability to get the younger kids in and playing this year," Stephens said. "So, it gave them the experience needed for the varsity level."

One of the players gaining that valuable experience was freshman Katelyn Poole, who took over as the team's new catcher and cleanup hitter. The Cougars needed Poole behind the plate because the old backstop had moved to the mound.

"She knew that we were going to be short-handed in pitching. So, in the offseason she decided to take it on herself and put herself in a position that she ended up being our starting pitcher," Stephens said of sophomore Abby Morris. "She got us through the season."

Another sophomore ended up winning the job at shortstop – the most demanding defensive position on the diamond.

"Ashley Thoms, who is an all-around great athlete, stepped in and played shortstop for us," Stephens said. "She stepped into a position that we thought was going to be hard to fill."

Like the Cougars, the Mats also had a roster short on experience.

"We were predominately a young team

that I felt was very competitive – by and large – when they needed to be," said head coach Steve Renfro. "So, I was very happy with them."

After falling to Acalanes 16-12 in extra-inning on May 19 in the final game of the season, Miramonte wrapped up the year with a 7-15 mark overall and a 3-9 record in DFAL action.

The Mats' top producer was the club's power-hitting third baseman.

"Megan Bower is – without a doubt – she's the difference maker on our team," Renfro said of the sophomore. "I think she ended up hitting something like 12 home runs. She just puts a lot of runs on the board for us. So, she's quite phenomenal."

According to Renfro, Bower wasn't the only Mats underclassman who emerged this spring.

"Overall, there's probably six or seven players that are really going to grow and make this team stronger as the years go by," Renfro said. "So, I'm pretty excited about it."

Acalanes, Campolindo and Miramonte End Track Season at State Meet

By Karl Buscheck

In her first full season on the Acalanes track team, senior Julia Lyons jumped her way to the largest stage in California.

"Making it to the State meet is the biggest feat – especially for somebody who's doing it for the first time," said head coach John Crain after Lyons competed in the long jump at the 98th CIF State Track and Field Champion-

ships on June 3 and 4 in Clovis. "So, for her to finish 16th overall is a huge accomplishment."

Lyons, who will join the track team at Boston College next year thanks to her brilliant spring, soaked in the environment at Veteran's Memorial Stadium at Buchanan High School.

"When I talked to her afterwards, she was very happy to be at

the State meet," Crain said. "She was very happy to be there competing and she just enjoyed her time a lot."

Lyons was the only Don to make it to State, but Crain was thrilled with how the season concluded for the entire girls team, which shared the league crown with Miramonte.

"We knew the girls were

good," Crain said. "And they even exceeded what we thought [they'd do]. For the most part, most of the girls are coming back. So, we expect to be even better next year."

Crain was also impressed with how the boys team surpassed their preseason expectations.

"The boys had a great season. At the beginning of the year, we

didn't have a whole lot of prospects coming back from last year's team," Crain said. "But for them to finish third in league and finish third in the league championship meet, they accomplished almost as much as the girls did."

The coach added: "It's going to be fun for the next two years – or more. [We] hope it continues."

... continued on page C3

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