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NCS Experience Prepares Acalanes Softball for Next Season

By Michael Sakoda



Brooke Panfili

The Acalanes Dons had their season come to an end when they ran into San Rafael's Ellie Bauer in the first round of the Division III NCS softball playoffs. Bauer struck out 14 Dons' batters, while allowing just two hits and one walk, propelling the Bulldogs to a 6-0 win on May 26.

"We just ran into good pitching," said head coach Victor Silva. "It's hard to win a game when you don't score any runs."

Acalanes, the only Lamorinda team to qualify for the postseason, earned the No. 10 seed after finishing the regular season 9-10 with a 6-6 mark in DFAL play, but the pressure of NCS got to his young team.

"We probably played our worst game of the year that day," he said. "It was nerves, just one of those games when a couple infielders get bad hops, and the balls they hit were placed perfectly between the outfielders."

Despite the 6-0 score, starting pitcher Brooke Panfili and reliever Alex Grant-Hudd only allowed three earned runs in a game that will, hopefully, be a learning experience for the Dons, one that marks the beginning of something special for Acalanes

softball.

"I'm really happy we made NCS because now these young kids know what it's like," said Silva. "They realize how important it is."

The Dons' season got off to a rocky start due in large part to inexperience and a slew of injuries. Junior standout Zoe Marrot missed the first half of the season but was able to come back and lead her team.

"She's our best player, and she really held things together," said Silva.

The rest of the starting infield, Kailey Meyer, Kylie Berry and Rosetta Shackett, are all freshmen on the rise.

"I think it took a long time for them to get used to the pressure of high school softball, but they did a great job," said Silva. "I don't see a ceiling for them if they keep working hard."

On paper, Acalanes' season might seem average, even underwhelming, but Silva sees it differently.

"I could see the improvement that the kids were making every game," he said while talking about the value of experience to a young team. "Plus, we beat Campo twice, we beat Miramonte twice, and that always makes the season perfect for us."

The Dons will return all their starters next year except catcher Meagan Hornsby, a huge loss according to Silva, though not an insurmountable one.

"We had a young team this year, but they kept improving, and I was really proud of them," he said. "I'm really lucky ... to have everybody coming back, and I'm really excited."



Alex Grant-Hudd Photos Gint Federas



Zoe Marrott and Kylie Berry

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