



The Pendleton Bucks pose for a photo with their first place trophy after defeating Putnam 7-0 in the 5A softball state championship game on Saturday in Corvallis. Staff photos by E.J. Harris

CHAMPS: Pendleton wins third state title

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“She’s just one of the most fierce competitors and toughest players mentally that I’ve ever coached, guys or girls,” Cary said. “She just will outwork you and she doesn’t get rattled. She’s just an unbelievable competitor and I can’t say enough about her.”

The Pendleton right-hander was able to settle in with help from her offense, which has been the case all season.

Junior Aspen Garton sparked the team in the second inning as she took a cut at a 0-1 pitch on the outside corner — which is where she loves pitches, she said — and launched it up into the wind and over the right field fence for a lead-off home run. When Garton rounded third base, she came home to her teammates surrounding home plate wearing paper cone party hat and leis, a look Garton said was a last-minute decision amongst the team to try and keep the mood light.

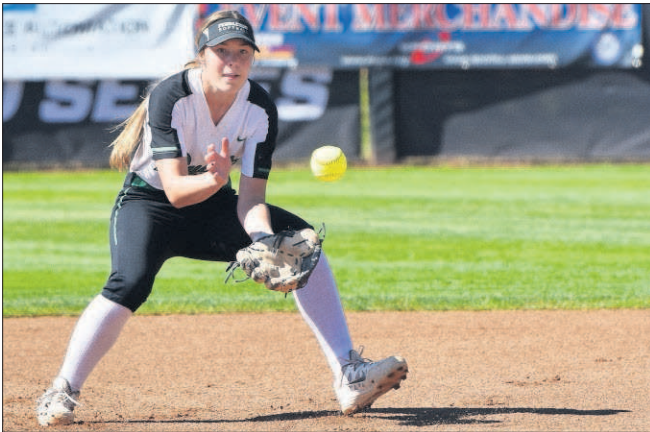
But Garton’s homer was only the start for the Buckaroos’ offense. Pendleton loaded the bases in the third inning and capitalized on a pair of Putnam errors to bump the lead to 3-0 and kept pressure on Putnam’s talented lefty Maddie Mayer for the remainder of the game.

“Every game we have something like that, some type of hit that just gets us fired up and gets us going and we’re an amazing hitting team,” Richards said. “And just something like that to break open the gates and get us hitting like we can and that’s huge for our team. And that showed them (Putnam) what we can do, we came after them after that.”

Perhaps the best inning



Pendleton’s Lauren Richards throws from the pitching circle in the Bucks’ 7-0 win against Putnam in Corvallis.



Pendleton’s Aspen Garton fields a ground ball the in the 5A state championship game in Corvallis.

for Richards in the circle came in the fourth. Putnam (21-6) recorded three singles in the frame to load the bases with no outs, threatening to get right back in the game. But Richards came right after the Kingsmen’s hitters

to induce an easy groundout and then two strikeouts to escape the inning unscathed. “I just stuck to what I was doing the whole game,” Richards said. “I was trying to hit my spots as best I could and focus on one



Pendleton’s Kirah McGlothran connects for a single in the Bucks’ 7-0 win against Putnam on Saturday.

pitch at a time and knew my defense had me behind me.” Then, the Buckaroos put the finishing touches on the game in the sixth. With two outs and runners at second and third, Richards turned on a pitch from Mayer and

singled into left, scoring both. Then Kalan McGlothran and Alexi Brehaut — both of whom went 2-for-4 on the day — followed with RBI hits to push Pendleton’s lead to 7-0. “That bottom of sixth

was definitely the exclamation point on the whole thing right there,” Cary said. “We could go out there and relax and try to get the last three outs of the game without being too tight. So some breathing room is always nice to have in that last inning.”

Richards then set the first two batters in the seventh down easily with a pop fly out and a strikeout. With the Buckaroo fans cheering the team from the grandstands, Richards induced a groundout from Putnam’s leadoff hitter Mikayla Schweinsberg to Garton, who fielded cleanly and threw to Brehaut at first for the title-clinching out, leading the team to celebrate with each other with one giant hug in the circle.

“I just thought to myself I have to catch this ball!,” Brehaut joked. “And if I don’t catch this ball it’s going to be so bad.”

McGlothran, like most of the Buckaroos at that point, impatiently watched the final out from her spot at third base and had a “Did that just happen? Is this really it?” moment. It did and the Buckaroos are state champions.

“It’s like the stars literally aligned,” McGlothran said. “I’ve never played with a better group of softball girls ever, we had so much good chemistry and this is by far the most fun, best season I’ve ever had. It’s awesome.”

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(RP) M. Mayer and G. Vadelund. (P) L. Richards and K. Solomon. W — Richards, L — Mayer.						
2B — A. Brehaut 2 (PHS). HR — A. Garton (PHS).						

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Pendleton seniors, from left, Lauren Richards, Kalan McGlothran, Rylee Gentner and Alexi Brehaut pose for photos after a brief graduation ceremony Saturday in Corvallis.

SENIORS: Have day to remember

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the championship game in Corvallis.

“It’s much better than walking,” McGlothran joked. “This is crazy special.”

It’s a moment that Richards and Gentner both said they had been dreaming about since they watched Pendleton seniors graduate on the field after the 2015 championship game when the duo were freshmen.

“When I saw the seniors graduate (here) my freshman year I knew I was going to make it happen and I was

going to graduate from high school on the Oregon State field,” Richards said. “It’s been a dream of mine even before high school. All of us seniors didn’t want to graduate back at home, we were going to make it happen and come to the Oregon State field.”

It was a special ending to the high school careers for the four, who helped the Buckaroos program to a 99-20 overall record and now a state championship in their four-year careers. The seniors have also all earned the chance to play colle-

giate athletics as well. Brehaut will play softball at Western Oregon University, Gentner will play both softball and volleyball at Walla Walla Community College, McGlothran will play basketball at Chemeketa Community College and Richards will play softball at Claremont McKenna College.

“I’m in my gown and softball gear,” McGlothran said. “This is just crazy.”

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