



Softball juniors hang tough in consolation

Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

The Wallowa Valley Cubs softball team initially met some stiff opposition at the 2019 West Region Junior Girls Softball Tournament in Tucson, Ariz. About 40 fans made the trek to Arizona to cheer on the team.

The Cubs started the series with a 19-0 loss to the Four Peaks, Ariz. squad on Thursday, July 18. The game ended after four innings because of the score.

Whether due to nervousness or excellent pitching, the Cubs had a problem getting their bats going, managing two hits over the duration. As Coach Shane Kirkland recollected, everything the ladies hit seemed to go right to one of the defensive players. Catcher Cooper Nave got the team's first hit in the fourth inning, when the Cubs nearly scored a run. Cubs errors also contributed to the loss.

Talking with the team after the game, Kirkland said that multiple girls mentioned "we really thought we would come here and beat everybody." While this didn't pan out, Kirkland called it a great statement for such a young group.

"No matter how hard you try it's hard to coach or teach confidence and we had no lack of that going into the game," he said.

The coach also spared no praise for the opponents, noting that they came to play ball. "Twin Peaks, Arizona, has a great program most of



Courtesy Photo/Annette Moeller

Wallowa Valley Cubs softball catchers Sophie Moeller, (Foreground) and Cooper Nave warm up pitchers for one of the Wester Region Tournament games in Tucson, Ariz.

them playing year around they made plays when they needed to and hit the crap out of the ball," he said.

The Cubs had a .285 batting average and a .285 on-base percentage.

The next day saw the Cubs facing Nunaka Valley Little League of Alaska. This game proved much more Cubs-friendly with the squad barely losing, 10-7.

"This was a great game that went back and forth for most of the game up to the 6th and 7th inning where they put up eight runs,"

Kirkland said. "That's when they scored the majority of their runs. The three-run home run shot hurt us."

The Cubs did put runners on base and even scored in the final two but were unable to match what Alaska put on the scoreboard. Like many Cubs games this year, going down into the bottom of the seventh frame, the ladies rallied to score three runs with two outs. With two runners on that were ready to score, an unfortunate strike out ended both the rally and the game.

"We were making a run at it, giving ourselves some good momentum with runners in scoring position," Kirkland said. "We had the opportunity; we were right there."

Kirkland said that the ladies played a good game with moments of brilliance. He noted that Cubs' bats were much livelier than the previous night. However, the squad's over all average was lacking. However, the Cubs had several noticeable plate performances. Liddy Fisher batted an amazing

End of the line for Cubs

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Monday, July 22, saw the Cubs fall to opponent Martinez Little League in an 11-1 rout that lasted five innings. The loss put an end to the Cubs' consolation hopes in the Western Region softball tournament.

The Cubs didn't play dead, despite what the score indicates. Stats show that the team had 10 hits, the same as their opponents. The Cubs ended the tournament with a 1-3 record, capping the first year a Wallowa Valley softball team won a state championship.

1,000 while hustling Cooper Nave kept her bat hot with a notable .750 in the box.

The Cubs had a .393 batting average and a .393 on-base percentage.

Saturday, July 20, saw the squad in the consolation bracket, as the tournament is double elimination. The Cubs fared much better than their previous two outings, defeating host team, Thornydale Little League 8-6. The game saw a virtual see-saw battle with the teams frequently changing leads until the Cubs broke the game open in the third inning, scoring four runs. They entered the seventh inning with a comfortable 8-4 lead.

Thornydale wasn't finished yet however, immediately putting players on base and scoring two runs. With two outs and the tying runner on base, the Cubs buckled down and got the last out.

Aimee Meyers secured the win for the Cubs, striking out three while throw-

ing an amazing 26 first-pitch strikes. Abby straight had a hot night with her bat, poking in two RBIs. The Cubs had 15 hits overall.

Kirkland said that he was amazed, but not surprised by the 15-hit Cubs explosion. He had told the ladies earlier that day to relax and have some fun by the pool, and that they responded in kind.

Kirkland said the Arizona weather wasn't having much effect on the Cubs' play. He noted the weather wasn't much different from Medford, where the team won the state championship.

The coach noted the whole experience is one of excitement for the squad. He said that he thought the team was prepared well and ready as possible, especially considering the youth of the team.

"The girls have as good a spirits as you could," he said. "It's great softball, it's fun softball and super competitive. the girls are getting to see a lot of great stuff."

White Tail Legends 4-H member attends shooting nationals

Steve Tool
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Cole Gomes, member of Whitetail Legends 4-H shooting team just added another award to his extensive collection. Gomes was a member of the Oregon state 4-H shooting team that took third at the 4-H Shooting Sports National Championships in Grand Island, Neb. from June 23 — June 28.

Club co-leader, Julie Gomes, said more of her 30-plus members had the opportunity to attend the Nebraska event, but qualifying for nationals requires competing at the state level. Cole Gomes was the only one of the club who made the journey to Albany to qualify last year. More than 300 other Oregon shooters did the same.

Ms.Gomes said that they drove the 4-H van to Nebraska.

"We got a lot of compliments along the way," she said.

In Nebraska, Gomes found himself competing against archers from 32 states. He competed in compound archery against 104 other contestants. In the FITA (Fédération Internationale de Tir à l'Arc, the governing body of archery) round, which included shooting at the standard "bullseye" targets and shooting at distances of



Steve Tool/Chieftain

PATRIOTIC ARCHER — Cole Gomes, member of the Whitetail Legends 4-H archery club, showing the form he used to help the Oregon state 4-H shooting team to a third place finish in national competition.

40, 50 and 60 yards, Gomes placed 29th while the team overall placed sixth, a single point from finishing in the top five.

In field shooting, which features targets of more variable distances, Gomes placed in the 33 slot while the team placed 10th overall. The 3-D category, which features foam animal tar-

gets, proved most lucrative for Gomes and the Oregonians. He placed 15th overall while the team placed second, ending with Oregon in the third slot for the entire competition.

Ms Gomes noted that the Oregon team was on its best behavior and that other adults and teams made note of it. Coach, Dr. David White,

a youth development specialist at Oregon State University, said he had numerous compliments about the team's behavior. The team ate together, cheered for one another and even held umbrellas for other competitors to help deflect the wind during competition.

"It's just what you do," Cole Gomes said. It's a part of shooting etiquette."

The hosts also showed some class, comping a meal for the team after it had eaten at a pizza restaurant.

As a show of solidarity and patriotism the squad wore shorts emblazoned with the American flag. When the team stood in the right order, it looked like one continuous flag. They accidentally posed for their team photo with the shorts in the correct order for the continuous flag.

Weather in Nebraska was very different according to Ms. Gomes.

"With the wind, you might as well try to shoot with a fan blowing on you," she said. "An industrial fan," her son added. "You're lucky to hit the target, let alone the center." Projected winds were at 45-50 miles per hour.

The variety of people attending the nationals was one of many noteworthy activities at Nebraska. "Cole must have met a million kids," Ms. Gomes said. "If you're not in 4-H, you're

not going to get that."

Her son said that meeting the people was the highlight of the trip for him. He added he still keeps in contact with fellow shooters from as far away as Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Texas and New Mexico.

Ms. Gomes said she hoped more club members would consider trying out for the state team. "It's the experience of a lifetime." "In 4-H, you can keep going back, meeting new people," Cole Gomes said. "It most definitely takes you places."

"It's not just shooting," Ms. Gomes said. "There's a lot to do."

She noted that individual states brought baskets of state-centered products, which went into a silent auction. Gomes contributed some jerky from Stangel Buffalo Ranch. Members also exchanged state pins, hats, etc. She also said that a water park opened its doors exclusively to the participants.

Dr. White also manages the state's shooting sports program and coached the team through its tremendous performance. He highly recommended the shooting sports program.

"I think the event is a youth development event," he said. "Even so, we recognize in the world of competition that these kids are developing. The kids in this program feel like

they belong to something special."

He also noted the role of coaches and other volunteers and the caring they show toward their members. He spoke of how this dedication results in many kids staying in the program for 10 years and puts members into what he called a thriving trajectory.

"We know they'll be able to set and manage goals and be open to new challenges," he said. "We look for every 4-H youth to come out of the program as an adult who is civilly engaged and happy," he said. "They're economically stable and become engaged and part of the community they live in."

He said the finish is the highest since Oregon has participated in national competition, and some have members who have even placed first in the nation in their categories.

White said that nine Oregonians participated this year and 53 have competed since 2013.

"We could send 36, and I hope one day we'll get there, but right now we're good at sending teams in archery and shotgun," he said.

As for Cole Gomes, he's got one more year left in the program with this year being the best year yet.

"It was definitely a trip to remember," Gomes said. "It's been a pretty good run so far."

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