

# North Douglas Softball



Riley Black prepares for a hit in the team's first game.



Nicki Derrick fires in a pitch against Glide.

## Team Rundown:

A season after making a run to the state quarterfinals, the Warriors are back for more. This year North Douglas brings back 2017 player of the year and pitcher of the year in junior Nicki Derrick. After North Douglas won the state title in 2017, Derrick missed the entirety of last year with an ACL injury.

"I keep kidding with her saying, 'Ok, you had a year vacation, now it's over. Time to get to work.' She's doing real well," said North Douglas head coach Jesse Rice.

While Derrick bolsters the team on both on offense and defense, the Warriors return senior captains Riley

Black and Joana Alcantar in addition to Sofia Alcantar, Hope Ward and Natalie Draeger. The Warriors also start three freshman in Halli Vaughn, Megan Cutsforth and Cydni Dill. The Warriors will catch no team's by surprise this season as they started the year ranked at number four in the coaches poll.

"Everybody is gunning for us. And I would have much rather the poll would have said seven or eight," said Rice. "But it definitely puts pressure on you, definitely puts pressure on the girls. But this group, they handle that pressure pretty well, they really do."

## One-on-one with Nicki Derrick:

*How does it feel to be back on the mound?*

It was really nice. Honestly, doesn't feel like I skipped a year. Sometimes I forget I skipped a whole year of softball.

It was just nice to play a game. You get anxious watching OSAA when other teams are playing games and you like to see what other teams are going to be like this year. It's just an exciting first game, I don't think there was any extra to it.

*How do you feel? Are you all the way back?*

I feel pretty healthy. Like, I don't notice a difference. Maybe there's a difference but I don't really notice one. The only thing I see a little bit is with my hitting. When you don't see live hitting for a year, it kind of shows.

*When the team comes into the season highly ranked, how do you deal with that?*

We know that we're a high level team to other teams so we know we're going to get their best shot day in and day out.

So we're kind of prepared for that but our mentality is kind of one game at a time everybody is equal. Because even the lesser teams are going to come at us with their best shot, we've just got to come ready for every game and I mean, we're just going to have to pull through late in the season. It's going to be exhausting getting everyone's best shot. That's what we're prepared for and our mentality is one game at a time.

*What is a strength of this team?*

We have hard workers but we just have some natural born talent. And I mean hard work will pay off in the long run. Our talent, we just have so much talent that teams are just really going to have to struggle to beat us. We just have really good game experience.

We say we're young because we have freshmen in new positions but they play at a high level and that's what we expect them to do.



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