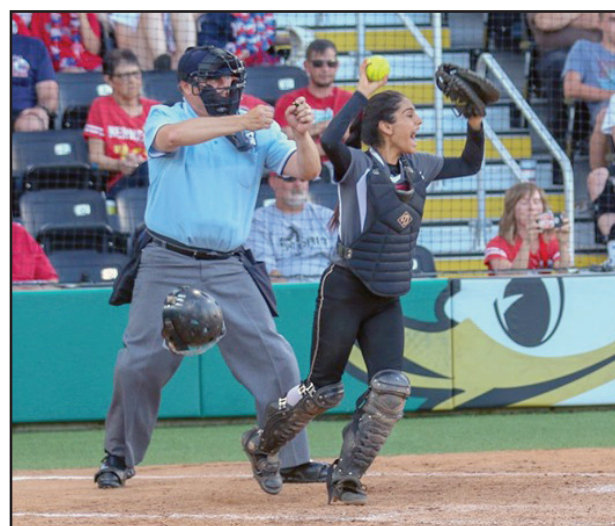


WARRIORS TAKE SOFTBALL STATE TITLE



Left: North Douglas pitcher Nicki Derrick celebrates after recording a strikeout to end Friday's state championship game in a 15-6 win over Kennedy. Top: Catcher Sofia Alcantar rises to her feet after the final out of the day. Bottom: The North Douglas team comes together after securing the win. PHOTOS BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL AND BECKY GERRARD

North Douglas softball wins second state title in last three seasons

By Zach Silva
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With what seemed like the entire community of Drain watching in the stands, the North Douglas softball team put on a show during Friday's state championship.

"I tell ya, I would say most of Drain showed up for the game today. We had so many fans here, it was fantastic," said North Douglas head coach Jesse Rice. "And I'm sure they're going to follow us all the way home and give us no rest for about a week. I mean, the community is fired up and they should be because it was a really, really good performance by these girls."

The ninth-seeded Warriors (28-3) gave their fans plenty to cheer about at Jane Sanders Stadium as the team, in front of a crowd of 1,107 people, claimed its

second softball state title in the last three seasons with a 15-6 win over defending champions and seventh seed Kennedy (22-5).

As North Douglas had done all season, the team paired a dominant pitching performance from junior Nicki Derrick — who recorded 16 strikeouts — with a barrage of hits on the way to a win. Kennedy, a team the Warriors have now faced in six straight playoffs, had given up just four runs throughout the postseason.

"When we got here, we just played with no fear. There were no nerves involved and that showed," said Derrick, one of six North Douglas players who was on the 2017 championship team. "This just means everything. I'm very proud of myself but I'm even more proud — this was a whole different team. Some people really had to step up to make this happen. That means the most to me."

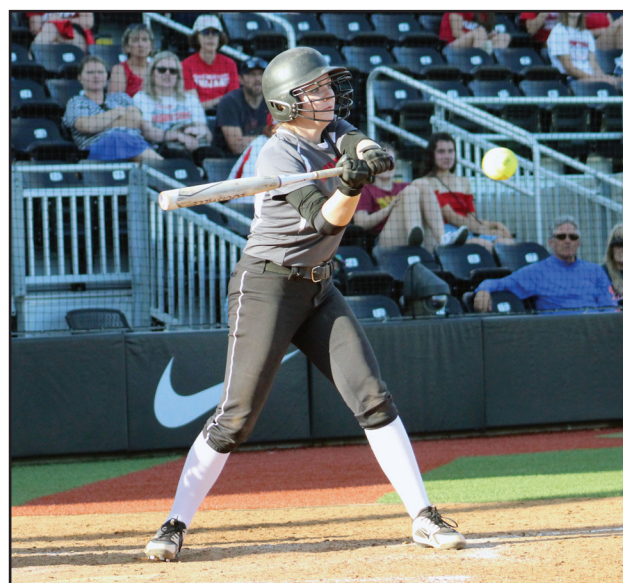
All season the junior pitcher — who struck out a staggering 57 percent of the

batters she faced, recorded six no hitters and two perfect games — was dominant against everyone. But especially against the best teams North Douglas faced. In the regular season, it was Derrick recording a no-hitter against Oakland and a pair of shutouts against Central Linn, two of the best teams in the league. In the playoffs, it was yet another no-hitter against Lakeview in the state semifinals, just

one game after shutting out the number one team Grant Union.

And on Friday, it was more of the same dominance as she tallied strikeout after strikeout.

"Oh my goodness. I honestly didn't even realize that [I struck out 16 batters]. I thought maybe like nine or something," said Derrick. "You just have to keep pitching and not worry about stats or anything. Not



Junior Natalie Draeger finished the day with four hits and was named player of the game. PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

worry about the score and that's kind of what it is."

"Wow. What a game," echoed her head coach Rice. "Just the fact that she is so confident. I've said many a times, for a 16-year-old girl, for her to have the confidence and the belief in herself that she has is just great. I mean, she comes out there and just knows that she can throw well and that she has a great defense behind her."

Derrick was in control early with five strikeouts against the first eight batters. The Trojans applied some pressure with the bases loaded and one out in the third inning, but Derrick answered with back-to-back strikeouts.

"I just had to stay locked in mentally," she said. "If my confidence waivers, it spreads to the whole team and I knew I was in the middle of a very big stage so I just had to do my job."

Kennedy finished with six hits as a team and began to find an offensive rhythm as the game progressed. The Trojans recorded two runs

in the fourth, which were initially contested when Kennedy's Rylie Newton collided with North Douglas shortstop Halli Vaughn, before adding two more runs in both the fifth and sixth innings.

But the Warriors weren't worried.

"Defensively, we've played solid all year but offense has sputtered every once in awhile. But to come out against a team like Kennedy and hit the way we did, was great," said Rice. "The girls really, really believed in themselves today."

After one inning of play, and the game still knotted at zero, the Warriors had complete faith that they were going to finish the day as champions. In the top of the first inning, the Warriors made solid contact including two balls hit to the outfield. While it was a quick three outs, the team knew that hits were going to come.

"At first we kind of didn't know about the pitcher and so we didn't know what was

CHAMPIONS see B3

How they got there: the road to Jane Sanders Stadium

Quarterfinals: North Douglas scores road win

By Zach Silva
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The Warriors are headed home.

"Boy it feels good," said North Douglas softball head coach Jesse Rice after the team's near 900-mile road trip around Oregon in the early rounds of the playoffs.

During that trip the ninth-seeded — but fifth ranked — Warriors started off the state playoffs with a 12-7 win over Bonanza (17-10) on May 22, which was followed up by a 5-0

victory on May 24 against top-ranked Grant Union (22-3) in the state quarterfinals.

Entering the game, the top-ranked Prospectors had a 14-game winning streak in what had been a dominant season. But it was North Douglas scoring a run in the first inning to set the tone.

"It takes a lot of the pressure off. Scoring that first run, you know that you can score against this team and you know — it just kind of

QUARTERS see B3

Semifinals: Derrick lifts Warriors to title game

By Zach Silva
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The formula for North Douglas softball success has been pretty simple: if Nicki Derrick is playing, the team has a good chance to win.

It worked again on Tuesday as Derrick threw a no-hitter and hit a two-run homerun as she guided the ninth-seeded Warriors (27-3) to a 2-0 victory over 20-seed Lakeview (20-9). The home semifinal victory gave the Warriors a spot in Friday's state champion-

ship game at Jane Sanders Stadium in Eugene at 5 p.m.

"I'm always amazed that Nicki can handle the pressure the way she does. She's 16 years old but I mean, the composure she has — and, again, she wasn't getting a couple calls from the umpire — but wasn't getting frustrated. Was mentally focused," said North Douglas head coach Jesse Rice. "She did really well."

Derrick threw 10 strikeouts in the game and

SEMIS see B3

Familiar foe awaits NDHS in state final

By Zach Silva
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Once again it is Kennedy and North Douglas playing in the softball state playoffs. But this time, the state championship is on the line.

"One of us was always knocking the other one out of the state playoffs. And so this year, it's nice that we're actually going to meet in the state championship rather than knocking one or the other out early," said North Douglas head coach Jesse Rice, adding, "Two

years ago, we knocked them out and last year they knocked us out of the playoffs, so, it's like I told the girls, it's our turn to get this one."

Playing at University of Oregon's Jane Sanders Stadium on Friday at 5 p.m., the teams will meet for the sixth consecutive season in the playoffs. The Warriors lead the head-to-head 3-2 during this stretch. In that time, North Douglas won both first round matchups (2014 and 2015), Kennedy

FINALS see B3

Athletes of the Week



This week's athletes of the week are the members of the North Douglas softball team. Pitcher Nicki Derrick struck out 16 while the Warriors came away with 14 hits to defeat Kennedy 15-6 in the state championship game.



With first place medals around their necks and a state championship trophy, the state-champion Warriors pose for a picture after Friday's game.

PHOTO BY BECKY GERRARD