

SPORTS

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Softball team gears up for new season

BY CLARE FORRISTER
STAFF WRITER

Last weekend, the Guilford College softball team kicked off their 2015 season with a double-header at Meredith College. Guilford lost the first game 4-7 and rebounded to win the second 5-0.

They have high hopes for this year's prospects. "We're going to win this year," said junior and outfielder Calli Pastor. "I know it. I can feel it."

Last season, the team went 29-15 overall and 10-10 in conference, placing third in the Old Dominion Athletic Conference tournament. The team hopes to build off a season that brought them one run away from the conference championship game.

This year, the preseason ODAC rankings placed the team in fourth place.

"I'm kind of excited to prove them wrong and get first or second," said sophomore second baseman Stephanie Sides. "We have the ability, and we have all the talent in the world to make it happen."

"We've just got to stay focused and get up there where we need to be. And we're almost there. It just takes time."

After losing only one senior at the end of last year, the team stands ready to take on the season. Returning senior and First Team All-ODAC utility player Marty Wilcox represents only one of many talented players on the team. Two top pitchers, junior Maggie Shaffer and sophomore Rebekah Langston, will also help propel the team toward success.

The returners and new additions of the team have been fully focused on preparing for this season.

"They're looking forward to getting started," said head coach Dennis Shores. "You know, practice is practice, but playing is what the girls are here for."

The players know they have to continue this hard work throughout the season.

"We fail nine times out of 10 before we become successful at anything," Pastor said. "You really need to have a strong mentality and be very determined to play softball."

Pastor, along with other junior outfielders Laura Hall and Brooks Bray, have already seen some of the results of that determination.

However, returning players are not alone in bringing determination and skill to the team.

"We also have a very good group of freshmen that came in this year," Sides said. "They're getting the hang of things now, so we're becoming more of a unit."

Success in the game of softball requires teamwork.

"The one thing that makes a good softball player is the drive to want to do your best and play the sport for yourself and for your team," said sophomore shortstop Taylor Boyd in an email interview. "The focus isn't just on the player but the team as a whole."

Boyd, along with senior fellow infielder and first baseman Rachel Howard, has made important contributions to her team.

The softball coaches know what kind of attitude makes a good softball player.

According to Shores, when he recruits for the team, he looks not only for skilled players but also for players who fit the Guilford mold.

Besides aspirations for winning the championship, the softball players have a hope for this season that hits closer to home: they want more Guilford students to support them at games.

"If people go to our softball games,



First-year player **Griffin Cox** (R.) practices throwing and catching with another member of the women's softball team.

we can build relationships with other students," Pastor said. "If they come to our games, we can also come to their events and really get to learn and grow as a community."

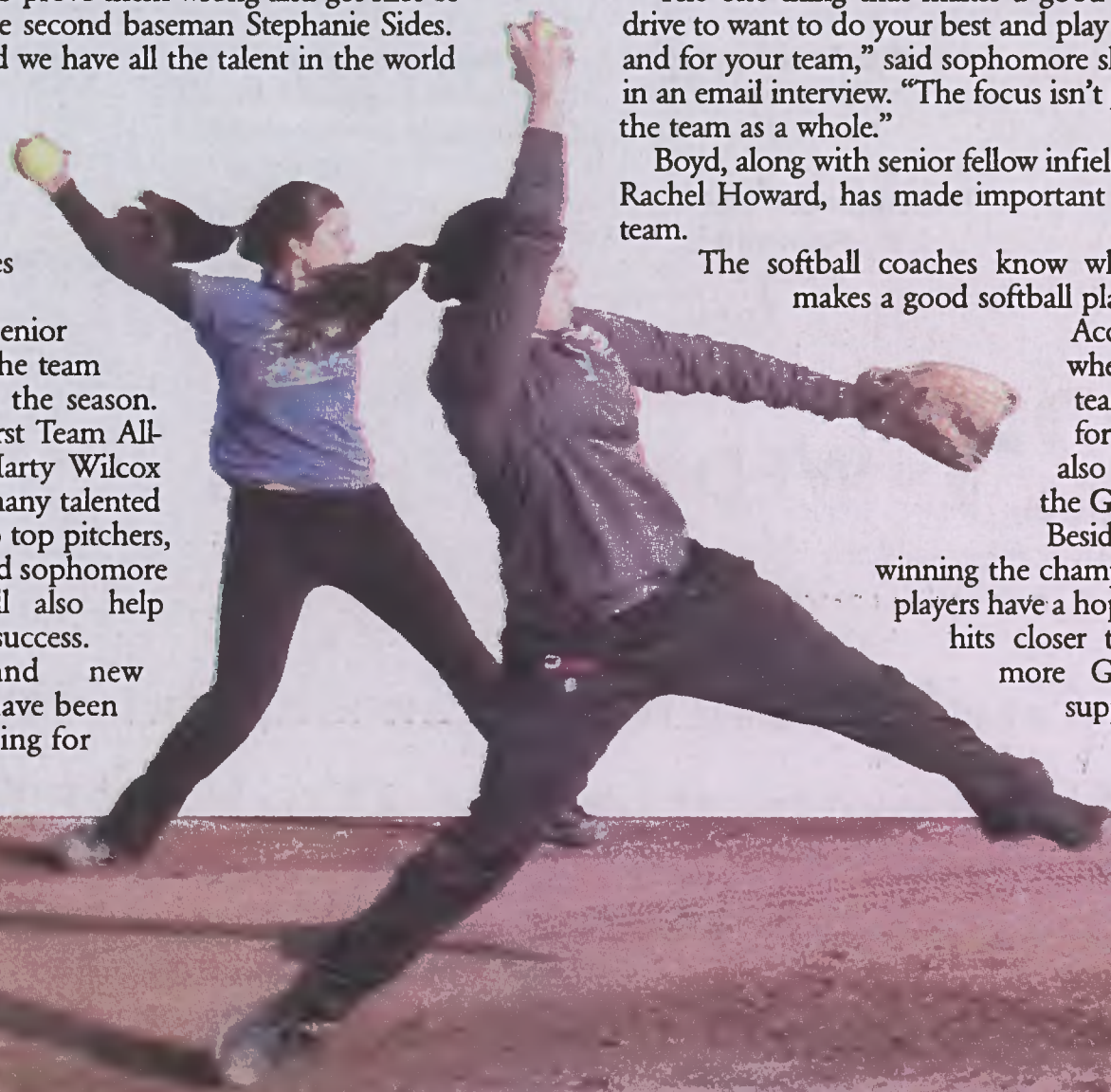
Attending sports events can help build community and bridge divides.

"We are such a (diverse) school, and I think it would be great for everyone not just to watch softball but other sports also," said junior football player and avid softball fan Christopher Campolieti in an email interview. "It would really help cover that void that exists between athletes and traditional students."

In addition to building community, fans enjoy attending the games for the excitement.

"They're all amazing softball players, and they've all got so much talent and respect for the game," said sophomore Madison Morrison, who played softball last year and continues to support the team. "It's just fun to watch them play and get excited."

The players appreciate the enthusiasm of their fans. "The more support, the better," Sides said. "It gives us confidence. It gives us something to play for."



New and returning softball players **Tyler Miles '17** (L.) and **Casey Snead '16** (R.) practice their pitching during a practice on campus at McBane Field on Feb. 12 as the spring season begins to pick up.

SPORTS CALENDAR

February

Women's Basketball

v. Lynchburg
Ragan-Brown Field House
Feb. 21 @ 2 p.m.

Women's Tennis

v. Washington and Lee
Dorothy Ragsdale McMichael '37 Centennial
Feb. 22 @ 2 p.m.

Softball

v. William Peace
Haworth Field
Feb. 21 @ 12 p.m.

Baseball

v. Greensboro
Edgar H. McBane Field
Feb. 25 @ 3 p.m.