

Elsie Allen Rugby into National Spotlight

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Perhaps the most impressive high school sports achievement in the North Bay this spring was in rugby, where Elsie Allen won the state championship and then battled all the way to the national title game before losing to Highland High School of Salt Lake City. Six Lobos players have since been invited to July's elite national team developmental camp in Indiana. They are: hooker Josh Inong, prop Manual Ambriz, scrumhalf Balamcab Gutierrez, outside center Mike Rodrigues, flanker Josh Berto and fullback D.J. Hunt. Coach Allan Petty said that Hunt, who will be a junior, "has a realistic chance to be the best fullback in the U.S. next season."

Additionally, three graduating seniors off the Lobos' 28-3 team have committed to college rugby programs: lock Julian Gray to Cal State Sacramento, lock Robert Meeson to UC Davis, and wing Kobus Grobelaar to the University of Victoria in Canada. Elsie Allen's rugby program began eight years ago, when Petty arrived at the school. To repeat as state champions next season, he said, the Lobos probably will have to fend off strong challenges from Jesuit of Carmichael and De La Salle.

In baseball: Casa Grande designated hitter Dom Gentile has been accepted at University of Nevada Las Vegas but may opt for the College of Marin to get more immediate playing time. In the NCS 3A tournament, Gentile's 10th-inning walk-off double defeated Petaluma in the semifinals, and his five RBIs in the title game paced the Gauchos (18-9) as they crushed Montgomery 10-0 for their third NCS championship in five years. Meanwhile, Gentile's teammate and younger brother, D.J., a junior, made last weekend's first cut at the Area Code Games tryouts, which involve the top

returning high school players from Northern California, Nevada and Arizona.

NCS A champion Justin-Siena of Napa, 27-0 this season, finished at No. 6 in the Cal-Hi Sports final Bay Area baseball rankings. Despite being the only undefeated team in the top 20, the Braves' predominantly small-school schedule hindered their ranking. Casa Grande finished No. 16, Petaluma No. 17 and NCS 2A champion San Marin (21-7) No. 20. Montgomery, at 20-3, was unranked.

In softball: NCS 3A champion Rancho Cotate (20-2) ace Jenny Johnson will pitch next season at Santa Rosa Junior College. Petaluma catcher Sadie Dolcini received a late scholarship to St. Mary's; her teammate and best friend Samantha Banister is on her way to Arizona.

Cal-Hi Sports' final softball rankings place NCS 2A champions San Marin (20-1) No. 8, Rancho Cotate No. 10 and Analy No. 19. Petaluma, Tamalpais and Ursuline were unranked.

Also unranked was NCS A champion Cloverdale (23-0), whose star pitcher, Vanessa Fitzgerald, might be the most unsung player in the Bay Area. Fitzgerald, who returns for her senior year, led the entire North Coast Section with a 0.196 ERA.

Rebuilding: Mike Erickson's Piner (26-3) boys basketball program will rely on a heavy dose of summer-league play in an effort to rebuild after losing its top nine players to graduation. The Prospectors, who lost a double-overtime thriller to Campolindo in March's NCS Division 3 semifinals, send all-league performers Ian Collins and Andy Medeiros to Craig McMillan's strong Santa Rosa JC program and Pace Samuels to American River JC. Post player Greg Alexander has opted to play football and will compete for the quarterback job at SRJC. Erickson said the 6-4, 210-pound Alexander "has a chance to be really good, to be a big-time Division I player."

Alumni news: Sebastopol's Bennett Davison is back in town this summer after leading his Virtus-Bologna team to the Italian Basketball League championship. Davison, who starred at Analy in 1993-94 and later on the 1997 Arizona NCAA championship team, averaged 22 points per game this season in Italy.

Here and there: She passed on last Sunday's 100th Dipsea race; instead, Nicasio's Mara Jeffress embarked on a solo 2,650-mile trek from Canada to Mexico along the Pacific Crest Trail as a fund-raiser for international medical aid. Jeffress, a scientist, reported after the first 50 miles that the conditions in northern Washington were abnormally wet and icy, with hypothermia a real concern.

Finally: In services last week, the west Sonoma County sports world remembered Jay Mascovich, 21, who died unexpectedly May 23. Jay suffered a stroke at the age of 6, which left him debilitated and with lifelong challenges, but he managed to live a near-normal life, attending Sebastopol public schools, playing sports and participating in

public speaking. To west county referees and public-address announcers, Jay was the consummate pro during the several years he operated scoreboards and game clocks -- always on top of things, always with a big smile.

-by Ted Gross

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