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Chaparral falls to CDO in final

By Brian Pedersen
For the Tribune

Before Scottsdale Chaparral began its run of four consecutive state softball titles in the mid-1990s, the Firebirds had to weather back-to-back championship game losses that served as motivation for the future. Second-year coach Brad Goddes hopes history is about to repeat itself, something he told his players after the Firebirds fell 1-0 Saturday night to Tucson Canyon del Oro in the 4A Division-I state final at Rose Mofford Softball Complex.

"Chaparral softball is back on the map," Goddes said.

The game ended with one out in the bottom of the eighth inning when Dorados senior Kate Wilczynski hit a solo home run to center field.

Second-seeded Chaparral (29-8) managed just two hits off Kenzie Fowler, a sophomore who struck out 12 and has already committed to play for the University of Arizona in 2010. Equally as impressive was Firebirds sophomore Mackenzie Popescue, who struck out 14 and tossed a four-hitter.

"These two pitchers . . . have you ever seen a pitching duel better than this?" Goddes said. "It was going to come down to one swing."

The Firebirds had a few offensive chances but never managed to string baserunners together.

The closest they got was in the top of the fourth when Tessa Braga reached on a one-out infield single.

After Popescue struck out swinging, Liz Hudson hit a squibber to the right side of the infield that spun away from CDO first baseman Kandice Glynn after it hit the ground. Glynn charged the ball and threw to second baseman Lindsey Weldon who was covering first. But Weldon dropped the ball.

Braga and the ball then headed for third. The baserunner was originally called safe by the home plate umpire, but after a conference, she was ruled out.

"We talked all year, the big part of softball is getting that one hit, but against Kenzie Fowler that's easier said than done," Goddes said.

"But hey, our girls got their swings against her."

Chaparral and its one-senior roster was making its first trip to a state final since 1998, the last season of a four-year run when the school dominated 4A softball. Though Saturday's game ended in a loss, the Firebirds could to be headed toward another run of state-final berths.

"This is a young, exciting, energetic team with special chemistry," Goddes said. "We'll be back here."



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