

“No one expected us to beat Jefferson.”

We were down by four in the first inning, but we pushed

hard to get ahead. I pitched my **heart** out for the team.

It was the **best** feeling ever.” samantha jimenez-11

on the road to recovery

by eliana jaime

No one could find the words. Instead of going straight to the field for practice as was the routine, coach Lenny Thorson sat his team down in the locker room. The girls sat quietly and watched their coach begin to tear up. He took a deep breath and said the words no one ever expected.

“I have cancer,” he said.

“My heart sank,” senior Brittney Hernandez said. “It’s not something you ever want to hear from anyone. I was scared that he was going to say that he was going to stop coaching. He’s been my coach since my freshman year, and I wanted to finish my high school softball career with him. He told us that he didn’t want this to affect how the season went, and I don’t think it did. If anything, we tried to use it as a little push, so we could improve.”

Doctors in Tucson, Arizona found cancer in Thorson’s eye, and it had to be removed. A coach for 23 years, Thorson wanted to keep his team focused on the game and not his situation.

“I didn’t want them to use this as motivation,” Thorson said. “Whether they did or not was completely up to them. I wanted them to know because I knew I’d miss a few practices. I wasn’t thinking about how they would take it; I just wanted them to understand. I got lucky with an amazing bunch of girls.”

Thorson’s team consisted of six varsity returnees. Still, experience was an issue. The talent was there, and the girls could compete with anyone. At least five members had either played on other school teams or club teams, but this was the first time playing on the varsity level. In her fourth year playing on varsity, senior Ashley Camacho still had to adapt.

“What made it easier to adjust to the new girls is that they had good attitudes,” she said. “In past years, our attitudes split up our team for a while. These girls came in positive and ready to play. When your team gets along well, it reflects on the field.”

IN IT TO WIN IT

Playing shortstop, junior Freedom Davis fields a grounder. “I know of some athletes who dread making the plays,” Davis said.

“I’m the complete opposite. I like to be the one to make all the plays and do them right. Even when I mess up, I own up to my mistake and work harder to avoid it next time.” Davis, like her teammates, was required to learn all positions.



victoria brown



victoria brown

GET THERE

Safe on first base, sophomore Dorymar Torres avoids an out. “My opponent dropped the ball,” she said. “I got there before the ball did. Even if she didn’t drop it, I still would have been safe.” Torres, who has been playing for two years, was one of four team captains.

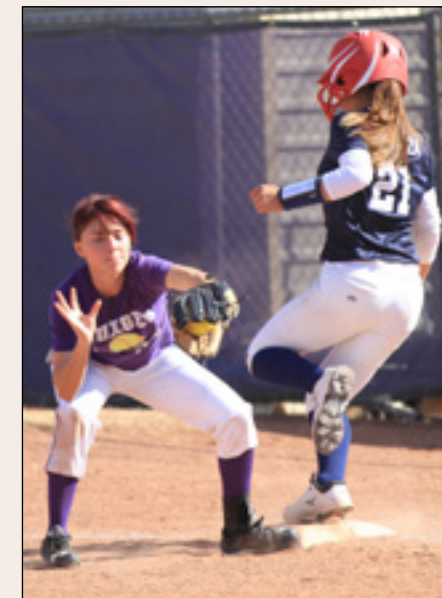


DUGOUT SUPPORT

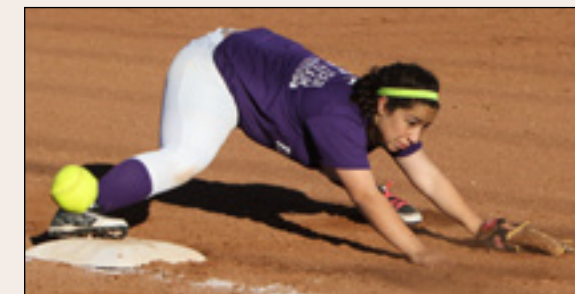
Right after getting off the field, junior Kacie Updike and sophomore Dorymar Torres cheer on their teammate who’s batting. “Even though you’re not out on the field,” Updike said, “you still have to focus on the game and support the ones who are. When your teammates are cheering you on, it’s a confidence booster.” (photo by rudee valenciana)

BASE HIT

Positioned on base, sophomore Crystal Dominguez attempts to force a Bel Air player out. “I was on first base,” she said. “They threw me the ball so I could get her out, but right when I caught the ball, she got to the base. It was a really close call, but she was safe. This was one of the first times I played with this team. It takes some time to adjust to new teammates and playing styles.”



genesis barraza



victoria brown



rudee valenciana

OUT OF REACH

Senior Brianna Yañez goes after a grounder while stretched out on first base. “We were playing well, but Americas’ hits were very strong,” Yañez said. “They also had more players, so they were able to switch girls in and out of the game. Our effort just wasn’t enough to get the win.”

GOTTA HAVE IT

Solid contact with the ball, sophomore Samantha Melendez hits it to left field. “Ever since my grandma passed away, I carry a rosary in my back pocket,” Melendez said. “When I’m about to bat, I reach back to touch it and say a quick prayer.”