

Eaton Red's softball ascendance into history

Eaton Reds softball wins back-to-back state championships in 3A

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No questions were asked of the Eaton Red softball team in the 2023 season. The 2023 season was a year of domination, ask any team that the Reds rolled over this season, in their league and in the CHSAA state championships. Take a peek at Max-Preps statistics, losing one game by a margin of three. Boasting a 28-1 record, outscoring teams 353-26 during the season, and in the state tournament, outscoring their opponents 52-4. The word domination is a brash understatement for the Reds repeat crowning season.

This back-to-back dominating 3A program didn't become great overnight. Just like any program players come and go, but the program established by Eaton Reds softball should be an example to any program. Since 2005 Coach Chad Shaw and Coach Dale Hughes have built something special in the town of Eaton. Shaw said, "I was blessed to help build something. Through all those years, players came through, and we steadily improved. Each and every former Eaton Softball player helped build this program. We are blessed that they laid the foundation of what was to come. This current team- the best team Eaton has had- is a culmination of 17 years of effort and time."

Such an intricate and special program wasn't built off luck, or a roll of the dice, the Eaton Reds softball program was built through attention to detail, hard work, dedication, and most importantly execution. For Coach Shaw and Coach Hughes, those 17 years of waiting for a break-through as big as this one were worth it. Dedication from coaches that is seldom seen in today's world of high school sports. That dedication showed over the 29 game season not just from the coaching staff, but from the players as well.

To put into perspective the dominance the Reds

showed this year, during the state tournament the Reds hit ten home runs and won all of their games via mercy rule. Sometimes, when the big game moments arrive and the state tournament arrives, teams crack under pressure despite dominating the entire regular season. Oftentimes, the state tourna-

board, the Reds had proved their dominance all year and didn't need to show anything in Aurora except what they had done all season, and what transferred during the tournament was nothing less than what the Reds softball team showed in the regular season, dominance, only this time the Reds could return

in and oiled, The Academy once again were evident of the destruction left by the Reds machine. Oftentimes the Reds softball machine begged opponents to accept their fate, rather than fight.

In the championship match, the Reds faced a familiar opponent. Thomas Jefferson, who the Reds

tournament play had been painted red, and not a more deserving championship team was crowned. call it fate or luck but the Eaton Reds softball team left nothing up to chance just like they had all season. The beautiful CHSAA 3A trophy belonged to the arms of no one else but the Reds.

They had begun their journey all the way back in August and that crowning journey of dominance demanded that nothing in its path would stop them from the coronation of the best 3A team in Colorado. For nearly three months, the Eaton Reds softball team churned and churned to the penultimate date with destiny at Aurora Sports Park. Last year, one of the obvious ringleaders of the machine, Sadie Ross,(24) sat by, out with a knee injury, and watched as her team lifted the state championship over University, but this year it was even sweeter as she pitched a perfect game against Thomas Jefferson and got her turn to lift the 3A championship trophy high into the Colorado air. Ross said, "yeah it was rough watching, even bittersweet to be in it this year and play and it was awesome watching them do it by themselves last year, but even better this year." Ross, who will play her future softball for Baylor University in Texas, won't forget her dominant senior year when she finally got her moment.

History had been made, written in the Aurora Sports Park softball diamond and etched into Colorado 3A sport history. The style and the fashion of the Reds softball team will be hard to match for any program, nonetheless for the Reds next year, but for now the softball machine forged out of the dust of Eaton, Colorado and tended to for 17 years can finally rest knowing it's made history. For the rest of 3A softball, just know when August of next year rolls around, that machine will be back for more.



Julia Meagher(24) and Sadie Ross(24) pose with the 3A state championship trophy after beating Thomas Jefferson 11-0 in the championship game

ment is described as a time of unknowns.

Aurora Sports Park tends to spur more heartbreak than joy and is a prime arena for proven powerhouses to lose their charge when it matters most. Not the Eaton Reds softball team. When they arrived on site in Aurora, the message was clear, do what they had done all year. For the Eaton Reds, Aurora wasn't the spot for heartbreak, it was the factory that manufactured a diamond. A diamond that had been a diamond all year. Nearly perfect, despite the Reds regular season loss to nationally ranked 4A team, Holy Family. A margin of three runs was all that kept the Reds from a perfect season. For the Red's though, it wasn't about a record or a score-

home with some silverware.

The long awaited journey for the number one seed, Eaton, began with a match-up against number 16, Meeker. Fans watched on during Friday morning, where the Reds displayed a performance seen many times during the regular season. Julia Meagher(24) at the mound, Emma Anderson(27) at the plate, and the Reds softball team ready to strike on defense and offense. Just like many other opponents of the Reds season, Meeker was tossed aside. In the second round the same occurred, Sterling also experienced the Reds dominance. In the semi-final match, The Academy got underway early, scoring, but once the Eaton Reds softball machine had been plugged

faced in the semi-finals last year. Whatever opponent that Thomas Jefferson were used to in the semi-finals last year, it was clear that the familiar opponent from last year's semi-finals had evolved into something much different, Thomas Jefferson had entered into unfamiliar territory with a team that was seven innings away from history.

Seven innings of a championship game hadn't even transgressed when history for the Reds was made. After five innings of play, not a single Thomas Jefferson player had crossed the plate, and 11 of the Reds had managed to score. Dominance had shown its true definition once again. Dominance was what defined the 3A state tournament. 3A softball