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GREENSBORO - There were two outs in the bottom of the seventh inning in Game 2 of the NCHSAA state 4-A softball championships Saturday afternoon at UNCG. Having already grabbed a no-doubt Game 1 win and in front by six runs against West Stanly, it was only a matter of time before Southwestern Randolph would be celebrating another state championship.

A line drive was hit to second baseman Kami Dunn.

"I am not going to lie, right before that, when I cry, I covered my eyes and I dropped my head and said 'You have got to dry up,'" Dunn said of beginning to tear-up even before the final out was recorded. "I could barely see the ball. When it was hit, I said, 'This is not good.' I could not see it."

But like most everything since these state playoffs began, it turned out just fine as Dunn grabbed the final out, securing an 11-5 win over West Stanly and, combined with an 8-3 win in Game 1 on Friday night, gave the Cougars their second state title in the past three seasons and sixth in school history.

The two wins over West Stanly gave SWR a 68-21 scoring advantage in the state 4-A playoffs, games that included a 9-3 win over North Lenoir, a 9-1 win over Roanoke Rapids, a 4-1 victory over Central Davidson, East Regional final wins over top-seeded Randleman of 16-1 and 11-7 and 8-3 and 11-5 victories over the Colts.

"I can't describe it," said SWR coach Toby Strider, who was able to capture his second state title as a coach, this time with daughters Maddie and Maylee on the roster. "Lord's got plans you don't know about. I wasn't thinking about this four or five years ago. I was trying to sell a car every day. For the way He has blessed me, my family and this team, I never dreamed of it. I hope these girls understand how special it is for them to do what they have done. I always tell them I 'm not worried about winning games, I'm worried about winning at life and I know we have a bunch of winners here who will do great in life."

They certainly had another great softball season. The Cougars finished the year at 25-4, winning their final nine games and 16 of their final 17 contests.

For eight players, including Maddie Strider, it was their second state championship, adding this one to the title captured in 2024.



"It's so crazy," Maddie said after reaching base twice and adding a sacrifice bunt in Game 2. "Every little girl who plays softball dreams of doing this. To get the opportunity to do it twice and do it with my dad being the coach and now my sister playing. It's just a feeling I can't really describe. I can't talk about it without crying."



There were plenty of happy tears Saturday after the win, a win that so many players had a hand in. Much like the entire season, the Cougars received contributions from players up and down the lineup. Maddie Strider was sensational at shortstop, Dunn had two hits and reached base four times Saturday, most valuable player Katelyn West had three hits Saturday and six in the two-game series, Alyssa Harris had two hits and two RBIs Saturday after recording two hits in Game 1, freshman Jada Freeland had three hits Saturday, Nauttica Parrish had a combined three hits, four runs scored and four stolen bases, and Chloe Eudy pitched a complete game on Saturday after West accomplished that feat in Game 1.

"If you want to see a team-win, this is it," Toby Strider said. "Lots of times you get this far because you have a dominant pitcher, you win 1-0 or 2-0. We didn't have that. We had to make plays. Our pitchers did a great job of keeping us in ball games. We didn't give up a lot of free passes, the girls made the plays and we swung it up and down the lineup."

Eudy, who was named the team's Sportsmanship Award winner on Friday, allowed five runs Saturday, four of which were earned, along with 11 hits. She did not walk a batter and fanned four.

"Our team, we have a really good bond, so I trust my defense," Eudy said. "With emotions, I tried to stay calm because I know they got my back. Our whole team is really solid all the way around. I know when a play is made, the next one is going to be made because we have a lot of talent."

The offensive talent has been very evident in the playoffs, especially early in games. Against Randleman in the regional finals, the Cougars scored nine runs in the top of the first in Game 1 and four in the bottom of the first in Game 2. Against West Stanly in the state title series, the Cougars scored twice in the bottom of the first in Game 1 and three times in the top of the first in Game 2.

In Game 2 Saturday, Parrish led off the game with a four-pitch walk, stole second, went to third on a grounder and scored on a wild pitch. Dunn doubled and West and Harris followed with RBI hits for a 3-0 lead.

"It brings us more calm, but we still focus in all the way because you can't let up when you're ahead," Eudy said.

The Cougars didn't as SWR tacked on four more runs in the second inning for a 7-0 lead. Eudy and Parrish had hits with Bristol Marine adding a sacrifice fly for a run and West Stanly, which committed seven errors in the two games, had two miscues.

The Colts scored twice in the second and once in the third to cut their deficit to 7-3, but hits from Parrish, Dunn, Maddie Strider and West pushed across two more runs for a 9-3 SWR advantage.

"It's like a domino effect," West said. If one person hits, then the next person is going to hit and then another one and another one."

The Cougars, who finished with 14 hits Saturday and 11 on Friday, saw West Stanly close to within 9-4 on Saturday before the Cougars added two more in the sixth on RBI hits from Harris and Freeland.

The Colts tallied once in the seventh but it wasn't nearly enough to even make the Cougars sweat in the final inning.

"It's been such a special ... not just this year but the past four years have meant so much," Maddie Strider said. "Created so many lifelong relationships and learned so many lessons. I enjoyed every single moment, enjoyed it so much."

The Cougars had no trouble in Game 1 as West threw a complete game, the Cougars played errorless softball and SWR jumped into a 7-1 lead after four innings.

"It's crazy, so thankful at the end of the game, before the game and yesterday, I just feel so much gratitude," Dunn said. "We literally play for the Lord, everything we do is to glorify Him and that's why we got so far. Our whole team follows the Lord, believes in the Lord and knows if it wasn't for us trusting him, we wouldn't be here."

There was another incredible crowd on hand at the UNCG softball field, dominated by the throngs of Cougar supporters.

"It's the coolest feeling ever," Maddie Strider said. "When you run out on the field and hear this huge roar behind you and your crowd is taking up three-fourths of the stands and there are people all lined down the first base line. They are like, 'Go get them.' It is so crazy to hear them cheer for us."

There has been a lot to cheer about all season long.

