

District 23-5A Softball Preview

Austin, Travis vie in strong district

Austin is back stronger than ever, thanks to a strong hitting nucleus and the 1-2 pitching of sophomores Charly Dement and Morgan Hawkins.

Already, the Lady Bulldogs are off to a 3-0 start, but will get their first District 23-5A test Friday against Elkins.

Austin head coach Terry Reyna feels team unity is a strength.

"Each player is working toward the same goal, and that is to be successful," said Reyna, "We have come to reality that though we have talent, it is the teamwork that will keep us in the running of our district."

The Lady Bulldogs return two seniors, two juniors and four talented sophomores in the starting lineup. The senior leadership is paced by Sarah Smaltz and Jessaca Spears.

Travis is taking on varsity competition for the first time this year, and head coach Gary Crissman feels his team will face the challenge head-on, if they can stay healthy.

"Our success will depend upon our adjustment to the varsity level," said Crissman. "We

are still pretty young with our pitching and players that have that experience at this level, even if they play 18U (select softball) in the summer."

The Lady Tigers are 1-2 in district, but have shown a propensity to come from behind, especially in non-district tournament action.

Some of the top players are Alexis Estrada and Holly Berger and pitcher Maryssa Silva.

Other solid players are Becca Rush, Rachel Webster, Kaitlyn Jones and Kim Pepper.

Upper Tier: Fort Bend ISD is, without question, the toughest softball district in the Greater Houston area. The top six teams could easily make the playoffs, or even win a district title, in most other Region III districts.

That being said, yearly powerhouses Elkins, Clements and Kempner, along with an Austin program that is joining that list, are the favorites. How they break down will be determined by defense and clutch hitting. Hightower has gotten off to a fast start and could supplant Kempner for a playoff berth.

District Prediction: 1. Elkins; 2. Austin; 3. Clements; 4. Kempner; 5. Hightower; 6. Dulles; 7. Travis; 8. Marshall; 9. Bush; 10. Willowridge.



GARY MARTIN