

5 juniors lead soaring Eagles baseball squad

By Geoffrey Robinson



SouthLake juniors (from left) Sam Remick, Nathan Sharp, Travis Hallman, Palmer Coleman and Jared Fortune have led the Eagles to a 8-1 start.

Most successful high school sports teams accomplish a lot due to senior leadership. At SouthLake Christian, the Eagles are being carried by a group of five juniors determined to compete for a state championship over the next two seasons.

Palmer Coleman, Sam Remick, Nathan Sharp, Jared Fortune and Travis Hallman have been tearing the cover off of every baseball they've seen so far this season. They've led their team to an 8-1 (through March 25) record and are starting to realize that they may have something special.

"It's a real cohesive group," said head coach Rich Landis. "All five are real receptive to coaching, and all five can play at the next level. They come to practice every day ready to work hard."

The cohesiveness of this group has been bred over a period of time. All five have known each other through baseball or school for quite a while.

"We hang out with each other everywhere," said Hallman.

When the team struggled a bit last year, these guys started getting together during the offseason to work on their game and become better hitters.

"A lot of them came down here and got in the (batting) cages, and I would hear the ping of balls being hit from my office," said Landis.

Palmer Coleman is the leadoff hitter for the Eagles. Standing at 6-foot-4, he can be an intimidating presence on the mound. But through the team's first nine games, he is hitting .621 with four homeruns.

"He's just hitting out this world," said Landis. "He can put the bat on the ball and hit for power at the same time."

Sam Remick, a multisport star for the Eagles, bats second for Landis' squad. But that's not where his coach thinks he has the greatest impact.

"[Sam] is probably the best defensive catcher I've seen in about 10-15 years," said Landis. "He's not a big kid, but he's just solid behind the plate. He's gotten off to a slow start, but that's because he missed a bit of time while he was busy finishing third in the state in wrestling."

Batting in the third spot for the Eagles is Sharp, who is batting .448 this year.

He's also performing on the mound, starting the season 3-0 with a 2.08 ERA.

Fortune, who his coach says may have the most upside out of all of his players, hits clean up for the Eagles.

"He got some playing time in ninth grade at the varsity level, and I think that helped push these other guys to be better," said Landis.

Fortune, who according to Landis didn't have much confidence on the mound last year, has stepped into the closer role this season.

"It's been really fun. I love closing a lot more than starting," said Fortune. "Hopefully we can keep this going the rest of the season."

Fortune is hitting over .500 this year with eight home runs.

In the fifth spot, Travis Hallman has surprised his coach and some of his teammates this season with the scorching start he's gotten off to, hitting nine home runs in nine games.

"Last year he struggled offensively," said Landis. "This year he's just been lights out. He's gotten bigger and worked extremely hard in the cage over the summer and through the year. He broke his swing down and recreated it. He can play just about anywhere in the field."

These five young men have turned the Eagles into a force to be reckoned with, but they don't like to take all of the credit.

"The games that the top five hasn't hit as well as we can, the six through nine part of the lineup has been explosive," said Remick.

"It's just fun," said Coleman. "There's no other way to explain it. I think we'll continue on the path we're on and be able to compete with any of the teams we play."

Expectations are riding high among these young juniors, and they won't apologize for being a little ahead of schedule when it comes to what they want.

"I know about seven of these guys can hit the ball as well as anyone in the league," said Sharp. "I think we have a real good shot this year and next of winning the state championship. It's a real challenge, but I think we can get it done if we work together as a team."

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