

## GET WITH THE PROGRAM

### Softball team hopes new preseason training will equate to on-field success

Erin McElhenny | Staff Writer

Mason softball players got with The Program this preseason.

Instead of the traditional Commitment workouts, head softball coach Liann Muff adopted a new conditioning regimen originally created at the University of Michigan, dubbed The Program, that develops the players' leadership, communication, and teamwork.

"We put the girls on four different teams and every day was a different conditioning activity," Muff said. "It required them to have a team leader, typically the team leader had to carry extra weight, sometimes literally. Every single day the effort level was extremely high regardless if they had all their team members there or not."

Each day The Program focused on a different aspect of strength for the girls. Days could be centered on interval or distance running, and individual or group exercise, according to sophomore Brooke Rice.

"Last year we went into the weight room we worked out and then we did open gym, but The Program was more focused on the individual person," Rice said. "We had to figure out what each girl was best at and what they could contribute to the team. I think the program brought everyone closer."

In any sport, communication is important, but according to junior Olivia Hopkins, it's essential in softball.

"It taught me to be a team player, to communicate; communication is huge," Hopkins said.

"Coach Muff pounded that into our heads. It's never only about you. I showed up everyday for my teammates, for my team, because if you weren't there they had to do that much extra."

With every exercise being peer-led, leadership was a key aspect in the success of The Program, according to Rice.

"It was hard to follow some of the other girls leading because everyone has a different leadership style," Rice said. "You have the silent leaders then you have the more outspoken ones and also people trying to compete to be the leaders."

Muff said the deeper into The Program the girls got the stronger they became as a unit.

"The girls began to rely on each other to get through the workout," Muff said. "In the beginning when they didn't understand what they were doing, leaders started to emerge and they began to strategize. In the end they were in the best shapes of their lives."

According to Hopkins, she accepted the challenge to make it through each day so at the end she and all her teammates could be the best they could be.

"While I was doing it I thought, 'Wow, this is really hard and this better be worth it,'" Hopkins said. "My first mile was eight minutes 30 seconds but my tryout one was seven minutes 45 seconds. It has improved me and my mental lookout at things, everything really. Looking back on it I'm really glad I got through it and pushed myself, it was totally worth it."

# 14

The wrestling team finished 14th at the state meet, scoring a total of 41 points. The Comets were the top team from the southwest region.

# 9.25

Senior gymnast Crystal Kratzer placed first at the state meet in bars with a score of 9.25, becoming Mason's first state champion gymnast.

# 91.3

The Mason competition cheer team scored 91.3 points out of 100 at the Greater Midwest Cheer Expo where they placed first.

# 12.72

Freshman Amaya King broke the school indoor shot put record and claimed second at the indoor state championship with a throw of 12.72 meters.

Results as of March 15.

## MVP: CAMERON PITTS

**Sport:** Wrestling

**Class:** 2015

**Claim to Fame:** GMC champion and state qualifier in 170 lb weight class

**Best thing about wrestling:** Winning

**Worst thing about wrestling:** Conditioning

**Toughest Opponent:** Moeller

**Motto:** Live in the moment

**Celebrity Crush:** Jennifer Lawrence

**Embarrassing Moment:** After I won a match, I pretty much passed out

**Netflix Addiction:** Prison Break

**Premeet Meal:** Chicken noodle soup



Photo contributed by Cameron Pitts