

THE CAPITOL HILL CURRENT

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Hill

Hill softball team is Virginia champion

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It's been a championship month for the Washington Senators, the Capitol Hill-based girls fastpitch softball team that has torn through the competition as of late.

First, the 15-and-under team claimed the Virginia state Fastpitch Championship, in Sterling, Va. — one of three major travel-league tournaments in the state. Then, the 18-and-under team earned a berth in the Sweet 16 of the PONY National Championship tournament, on the heels of seven straight wins.

"We have really put D.C. fastpitch softball on the map," said head coach Stan Kolbe. "Starting with a few girls and no home field to being competitive at the highest levels in national tournaments is quite an achievement."

The Senators field two teams: an older 18-and-under team, and a younger team that competes as a 15-and-under or 14-and-under club depending on tournament rules. Coach Brad Davidson manages the

younger team during most of their summer tournaments, and Kolbe travels with the older team.

The 18-and-under team is facing international competition — including teams from Russia and the Czech Republic — at the PONY Championships in Ohio this week. In recent weeks, they have been tuning up in showcase events in front of college scouts. In New York, the

Senators made the finals of one tournament, but the final game was rained out.

The Senators were also the runners-up in the Delaware Invitational, losing the championship game 7-6 in extra innings. Kolbe said he was particularly proud that earlier in the tournament they defeated a Delaware "Gold" team, a team with players who are eligible for 18-and-under play due to their age but have a year of college experience. The Senators beat that team 3-1.

"You don't expect to see college players at a showcase event," Kolbe

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It's been a banner year for the Washington Senators softball teams, with wins in Virginia's state tournament and a shot at the under-18 national championship.

said, "but I'm not complaining."

Still, the tournament berth is a bittersweet moment for older girls who will move on to college competition in the fall. Some of the team began playing T-Ball with Capitol Hill Baseball more than a decade ago. Nevertheless, Kolbe remains confident that his younger players are ready to step up and fill the void.

"We will miss this group of departing players but are fortunate to have a solid group moving up," Kolbe said. "We anticipate their growth to the same national caliber that we

have achieved so far."

The younger team has certainly proved their muster so far, nabbing the Virginia USSSA championship after winning all five of their contests. Their closest game was a 4-2 victory over the Arlington Sage in the championship game. Earlier that day, the Senators beat the Sage 5-0 to give them their first loss in the double elimination tournament. This was the Senators' third Virginia USSSA championship in six years.

According to Kolbe, the Senators are allowed to compete for the Virginia title because they do not have the facilities to host their own tournament in D.C.

"It's kind of similar to the D.C. scholarship program," he said. "We have no home, so they let us go elsewhere."

Their next big challenge is the ASA World Series tournament, where they will compete in the 16-and-under division. The team is asking supporters and fans to consider donating to help cover the significant cost of travel and tournament fees, which not all players' families can pay themselves. Information about the team and donation opportunities is available at senatorsoftball.com.