Ohlone coach celebrates 808th career victory

By JOHN HUGHES
Photographer

Donna Runyon is the head coach of the Ohlone Women’s Softball team. After defeating Diablo Valley College on Feb. 7 by a score of 19-3, Runyon achieved her 808th career victory in coaching at the junior college level.

Runyon started her coaching career at Cypress College in Orange County in 1980. She came to Ohlone, working part time, in 1987.

She became full-time as the head coach of the Ohlone Women’s Softball team in 1989.

Easton Sports gives out awards for every 100 victories after the 400th.

These awards are given out to high school through college Divisions I, high school to Division 1, sports coaches.

Every year, Easton Sports honors coaches at a national convention to celebrate their induction into the “Victory Club.”

Runyon has achieved this coveted award four times now, with last year’s victory being her 800th.

Runyon has been coaching softball for 32 years, and the Renegades have won their league championships for the last nine years in a row.

Runyon said the secret to her success is to “make the players realize that this program is their extended family. “They know you care about them as a person not just a softball player and you do what you can to help them succeed and grow,” said Runyon, adding, “Teaching life lessons as we go.”

Her achievements have not gone unnoticed among the coaches at Ohlone.

“My peers in my department have congratulated and acknowledged my achievement and that really is special,” Runyon said.

Runyon has seen highs and lows as a coach at Ohlone.

“When a player drops out of school before obtaining their AA degree and playing softball for two years,” is a low, she said.

The highs include “getting every player a degree here and then some choices to play at the next level and then moving on and succeeding at the next level.”

Her past players have gone on to achieve degrees from four-year universities and colleges such as UC Davis, CSU Stanislaus, Sacramento State, CSU Bakersfield, Nevada Reno, Cal State East Bay, CSU Monterey, Sonoma State, San Francisco State and San Jose State.

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—Coach Donna Runyon

As third base coach, Donna Runyon signals her runner on base. She has been coaching softball at Ohlone College since 1987 and been a coach for more than 32 years.

Ohlone Softball met its match Saturday in the first game of a double header, but finished the day strong with a victory in extra innings.

The Lady Renegades had started their season well, crushing Diablo Valley and Modesto in their first two games.

Ohlone College beat Fresno City College 4-3 in eight innings during the second game, but seventh-ranked San Joaquin Delta proved to be too much for them to handle Saturday.

Ohlone fell behind fast to Delta, giving up a two-run home run in the first inning.

The Lady Renegades never managed to quite get their feet under them in the early morning affair.

Delta continued to pile up runs on walks as a bases-loaded double in the third by Erica Mireles to score two runs and followed it up with another run by way of a fielder’s choice.

San Joaquin Delta starting pitcher Kelsie Monroe held the Lady Renegade’s scoreless as her team cruised to an easy victory on the road.

The 9-0 loss in six innings was disheartening for the 2011 Coast Conference champions, but with a game against Fresno City College immediately after, there was no time to dwell.

Ohlone, ranked 10th in the state, found themselves behind again in the second game of the day, giving up two runs in the fourth inning.

It but quickly returned the favor with three runs of their own in the fifth.

The lead was short-lived however, as Fresno came right back with another run to tie it up in the sixth.

After a scoreless seventh inning, the Lady Renegades found themselves in extra innings for the first time this season.

The eighth inning was all the Lady Renegades needed to finally put an end to their long day.

Ashley Vignola started the game ending rally with a single and came around to score the final run after Jamie Costa’s fly ball was dropped in right field.

“We found a way to win,” Head Coach Donna Runyon said.

Ohlone starting pitcher Brittany Wright kept the Lady Renegades in the game, going eight strong innings and picking up her third victory of the year.

Ohlone has another double-header on Feb. 17, in which they face College of the Sequoias and then have a chance to avenge their loss when they face San Joaquin Delta.

Softball schedule

Feb. 17-12:15 p.m.
At San Joaquin Delta College
Feb. 18-2:30 p.m.
At College of the Sequoias
Feb. 21-2 p.m.
Foothill College, at home