

Sports

SLUGGING STARS

Baseball starts season strong with skilled team, high spirits

Starting the season 11-1 and 6-0 in the De Anza division, the varsity baseball team has succeeded because of its confident mentality, senior outfielder Zach Hayward said.

“We’ve gone into every game with a good game plan, and we’ve done a good job of executing that as far as knowing what we want to do at the plate and then also having our pitchers be consistent and throw strikes,” Hayward said. “We’re pretty confident as long as we stick to our game plan, we’re going to be a tough team to beat, no matter who our opponent is.”

Senior shortstop Xavier Esquer said the team’s good chemistry off the field has also helped its performance on the baseball diamond.

“Individually, I feed off the team (and) our team has really good team chemistry, so we know when we’re playing games that if someone messes up, there’ll be someone there to pick you up,” Esquer said. “And just knowing that allows you to play more carefree, so

you’re able to just relax and play better and become the best player you can be.”

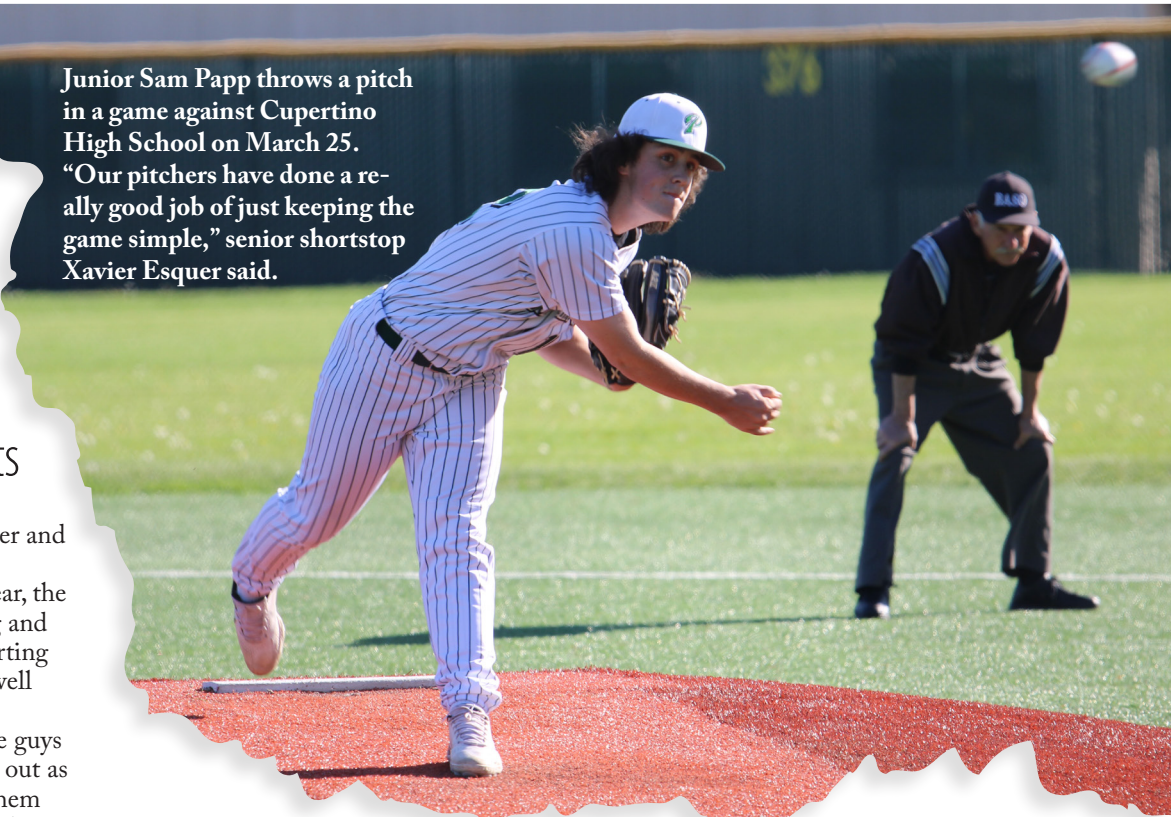
With five shutouts already this year, the team’s pitching has been both strong and reliable, Esquer said. He said the starting pitchers, bullpen and defense work well together.

“Our pitchers understand that the guys behind them are going to help them out as best they can so they can just trust them and just not necessarily feel like they have to strike out everyone,” Esquer said. “We (have a) really strong defense so we can pick up our pitchers, but our pitchers have also done a really good job of just keeping the game simple, like not running the pitch count up.”

Senior pitcher and third baseman Danny Peters said a strong lineup from top to bottom has helped on the offensive side of the ball.

“We have some of the top players in the country, and they are great leaders for all the younger kids,” Peters said. “A lot of kids I know on the team — like the sophomores — they all look up to the big kids, like (senior outfielder) Henry Bolte and Esquer. So they all started working so much harder, which is all due to Bolte’s credit and Xavier’s stuff.”

Junior Sam Papp throws a pitch in a game against Cupertino High School on March 25. “Our pitchers have done a really good job of just keeping the game simple,” senior shortstop Xavier Esquer said.



Despite the team’s success, Hayward said the season has not been all smooth sailing. He said the team struggled to maintain a competitive atmosphere in the beginning of the year when it lost its first and only game to 8-2 Valley Christian.

“Sometimes our energy will slack off — in the beginning of the year, we were really flat,” Hayward said. “And for us, it’s all about the energy. It’s not just the nine guys in the field. Everybody in the dugout can really make an impact on the game just with their energy, cheering on the teammates and just being locked in.”

The team will participate in the nationally recognized Boras Baseball Classic Tournament in Sacramento from April 11 to April 14, where it will face off against the top teams from high schools from all around California. Aside

from this tournament, Esquer said the team also looks forward to its highly-anticipated matchups against 8-4 Serra on April 2, while Peters said he is excited to play in the two-game series against Los Gatos later this month.

While Esquer said the goal of all the players on the team is ultimately to win CCS and the state championship, the team is doing its best to power through the regular competition season.

“Obviously, the goal is to win,” Esquer said. “If we lose one here or there, it’s not the end of the world, but obviously we’re doing everything in our power to make that not happen, and I trust our guys that it won’t happen.”

Austin Xiang
Editor-in-Chief



Senior pitcher and third baseman Danny Peters slides for a base in a March 25 game against Cupertino High School. “We have some of the top players in the country, and they are great leaders for all the younger kids,” Peters said.

AUSTIN XIANG/THE CAMPANILE

Class of ‘21 alumni succeed in college sports

Hannah Singer
Staff Writer

In a game against the Oregon Ducks on March 5, University of California at Santa Barbara infielder and Paly alumnus Zander Darby broke a fourth-inning scoreless tie, pushing his first collegiate homer over the left-field fence. Three innings later, Darby did it again.

Darby, a freshman on the UCSB baseball team, played junior varsity baseball at Paly for one year and varsity baseball for three years.

Darby said a perk of playing a sport at the collegiate level is being able to build strong relationships with everyone on the team.

“At the college level, you get to live and hang out with (your teammates) all the time, and you get to spend time playing a sport you love,” Darby said.

Paly alumnus Aaron Kim specializes in high jump on the mens track and field team at the University of California, Los Angeles.

When Kim attended Paly, he was on the junior varsity and varsity track and field team each for two years. Kim said UCLA’s track and field team is similar to his high school team.

“Everybody on the team likes to have fun,” Kim said. “Everybody’s there to work hard, but everybody knows how to have a good time and enjoy themselves.”

Kim said the main difference between sports at Paly and at UCLA are the tournaments and competitions.

“The meets we attend are a lot more structured and organized, and the rules are a little bit more strict,” Kim said. “And the competition is just so much greater (because) you’re competing against some of the best athletes in the nation.”

For Darby, the main difference between playing a sport at Paly versus a college like UCSB is how the coaches treat individual athletes on the team and whether or not the coaches pay attention to outside responsibilities.

“(In high school), the coaches cater towards your homework,” Darby said. “But (in college) you have to put your team first and figure out ways if you’re taking hard classes ... to get it done on your own time.”

Darby also said playing a sport in high school is much less stressful than playing a sport at a collegiate level, let alone at the Division I level.

“High school athletics are primarily about enjoying the sport,” Darby said. “Obviously you want to get better too, but it’s not as demanding as Division I.”

While the jump from high school sports to college sports is substantial, Darby said Paly helped prepare him for the academic rigor of college, which has helped him balance his work between sports and academics.

“I learned really good study habits, and I learned how to build relationships with teachers really well at Paly, (both of which have) helped me here at UCSB,” Darby said.

Kim said the coaching he received at Paly assisted in developing



KEVIN CANNON/USED WITH PERMISSION

UCSB infielder and Paly alumnus Zander Darby fields a ground ball during a game against the Oregon Ducks. “At the college level, you get to hang out with (your teammates) all the time, and you get to spend time playing a sport you love,” Darby said.

him into a better athlete and student and prepared him for collegiate sports.

“As a collegiate athlete himself, (my Paly coach) gave me a lot of really good advice and made some necessary changes to my training program that he felt would best prepare me to compete at this level,” Kim said. “I wouldn’t be here without his help and the help of the other coaches.”

Kim said there are some important criteria Paly athletes should think about when deciding whether or not they want to pursue competitive sports at a collegiate and post collegiate level.

“The first thing is that you really have to enjoy every aspect of (the sport),” Kim said. “You have to enjoy going to the gym and working out, working hard on and off the field and making sure that you are taking care of yourself mentally and physically.”

Darby said Paly athletes should know that getting to the next level in competitive sports is not easy, but that they should put in the work and effort if they know it’s what they want.

“If you have future aspirations of getting to the next level, it doesn’t come free,” Darby said. “You’re going to have to earn it.”

Score Report

Boys Baseball

Recent Scores

Paly vs. Santa Clara
3/30, W, 11-1

Paly vs. Cupertino
3/25, W, 20-0

Girls Softball

Recent Scores

Paly vs. Watsonville
3/26, L, 15-0

Paly vs. Santa Teresa
3/26, L, 9-0

Boys Volleyball

Recent Scores

Paly vs. Wilcox
3/25, W, 3-0

Paly vs. King’s Academy
3/24, L 3-0

Boys Lacrosse

Recent Scores

Paly vs. Menlo Atherton
3/24, L, 14-6

Paly vs. Los Altos
3/22, W, 14-10