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Canyon's Randle gives new meaning to 'puppet coach'

By [Chad Peters](#) - Express-News

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New Braunfels Canyon players listen to coach Kevin Randle during practice. He will coach the Cougarettes when they begin their Class 4A regional semifinal best-of-3 series against Port Lavaca Calhoun on Friday night. TOM REEL/treel@express-news.net

NEW BRAUNFELS — The sock-puppet version of Kevin Randle could not send in signals, tell a runner to go or do much else to influence New Braunfels Canyon's playoff softball series last week.

But none of that really mattered when the Cougarettes sought a suitable stand-in for their state championship-winning coach, whose status for the series was in question after being hospitalized for a week with an elbow infection.

The puppet met the most essential prerequisite — it possessed atop its "head" a cardboard-cutout likeness of Randle's trademark, good-fortuned khaki-colored Canyon cap.

“There was one game we almost lost this year where I didn't wear the hat,” Randle said, “and they (the girls) threw a fit and said I had to make sure I have it on all the time.

“They're concerned about the hat.”

Fortunately for the Cougarettes (29-2), it never came down to entrusting things to a sock puppet.

Randle, 42, returned to the team with hat in tow Thursday following a week-long stay in the hospital with a staph infection that spread throughout his right arm.

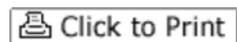
He will continue coaching when the team begins its Class 4A regional semifinal, best-of-3 series against Port Lavaca Calhoun at 7:30 p.m. Friday at Weimar.

“There wasn't anything that was going to stop him from being here,” said senior first baseman Aby Kester, who along with teammate Kailee Vrana created the puppet.

Randle initially went to the hospital on May 5 after noticing tenderness and swelling in his arm following a practice. He was released and coached in a game the next day but was rushed back to the hospital afterward when his arm swelled up and turned bright red from shoulder to fingertip.

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