

FASTPITCH

Softball

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**COLLEGE SOFTBALL
WIMPS AND WHINERS
NEED NOT APPLY**

Stacie Mahoe

**REGROUP. REFOCUS.
KNOW YOURSELF FIRST.**

Jen Croneberger

BONUS:
VIDEO OF THE MONTH:
**DR. DOT RICHARDSON INTERVIEWS
CAROL HUTCHINS**

produced by
Fastpitch.tv

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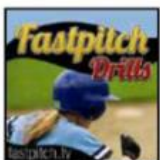
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SOFTBALL ACADEMY

with Mitch Alexander

Collegiate View: Playing in Division I



This month, we continue our look at what it's like to be recruited and play in different divisions. I interviewed Annie Kennedy from the University of Maine, a Division I school. Annie graduated in 2014 from Rocky Point High School (Long Island, NY). She was 1st Team All-state, Suffolk County Small Schools Pitcher of the Year 2013 and 2014, All County 3 years in a row and League 5 pitcher of the year 3 years in a row. At UMaine, she earned the title of America East Softball Champion, NCAA All-American Scholar Athlete and has been on the Maine Business School Dean's list.

Q: What specific recruiting activities did you perform and when? Which ones do you think were most helpful?

A: My dad and I scheduled different clinics basically every weekend of the winter of my junior year. I got recruited at the Maine clinic. This is a great way to stand out, especially for pitchers. You get personal time with the coaches and get to see the campus first hand. You can also meet the girls on the team. I left Maine on Sun-



day and by Tuesday I committed to go to school there. I definitely recommend going to schools' personal clinics. It was extremely helpful for me.

Q: How much help did your travel coach provide in helping you get recruited?

A: My travel coaches helped guide me in the right direction during my recruiting process. Both of their daughters played in college so they were very knowledgeable to talk to and I am very thankful I had them. Julie Soviero, my pitching coach also helped me very much. She kept my confidence up during a few hard times and inspired me to not give up.

Q: Did you find that showcase tournaments were an important part of your recruiting efforts?

A: For me, I was already committed for my final 2 full seasons of summer ball. I got recruited at a clinic, February of my Junior year. I believe that travel ball tournaments helped me prepare for college-level play. Playing in games against other future collegiate athletes helped me stay sharp. I know a lot of my teammates did get recruited playing in tournaments, mainly playing out in big Colorado and California tournaments.

Q: Please describe the timeline of how your recruiting took place.

A: My process was rather simple. I went up one weekend to Maine on Saturday with my dad. On Sunday, I attended a Maine softball clinic in the dome. I pitched for the head coach one on one, then hit and then fielded. It was a 3-hour clinic. My dad and I had to leave immediately following the clinic because we had to catch



a ferry home and we had school and work in the morning. Coach told me she would email me on the ride back and we would talk. She was not able to call me first so we had to set up a time to speak. I called her at 4pm the next day and she gave me an offer and told me to discuss it with my parents and call her back again the next day at 4pm. I called her back the next day and accepted and it was a huge relief to be able to finally say I committed to my number 1 school. The rest of my high school career was used to prepare for college ball.

Q: Were other schools were interested in recruiting you?

A: I only visited Division I schools. It always was a dream of mine to play DI so I followed what I've always wanted since I was a little girl. Other schools found me because I went to them. Maine was definitely more aggressive than any other school I spoke with.

Q: What made you choose your current school? What specific things attracted you?

A: I fell in love with the campus and the state in general. I wanted to go somewhere different than where I grew up and Orono, Maine was definitely a culture shock for me. The coaches were also genuine, good people and my parents felt really good about dropping me off at school with them to look over me. The University of Maine is the only division I school in the state, so there is so much pride for the Blackbears up there. I wanted to play and represent Maine.

Q: What made you decide to go with a division I school?

A: It was a dream of mine since I was a little girl. My dad played football and baseball at The University of North Carolina so I was always inspired to be at the top of the competition like he was. I also



wanted an opportunity to play in the NCAA Tournament because I watched it on TV since I was little. I was lucky enough to pitch at The University of Georgia in the first round of the tournament last spring. It was an unforgettable experience.

Q: Did you receive an athletic scholarship from your current school? Did you receive an academic scholarship?

A: I received an athletic scholarship and an academic scholarship to go to UMaine. I fell in love with the school before I was offered any money so the scholarship definitely helped my family and me a lot, but it was not the only reason I chose to go to UMaine.

Q: What differences are you aware of between division I and division II or division III softball programs?

A: I really do not know much about this topic. I'm pretty sure that Division I is legally allowed to have more practice hours and play more games but that's about it.

Q: How do you feel that your college and softball experience is different from some of your friends who are playing in different divisions?

A: I know some of my friends ended up not being a fan of their coach or not getting along with their teammates. I was lucky enough to make the perfect decision for me and enjoy every minute of my time at UMaine.

Q: How did your Freshman softball experience start and when?

A: It was definitely challenging adjusting to the faster pace of the game, but my transition went pretty smoothly. I made my first col-



legiate appearance against The University of North Florida in the Spring of 2015. I came in for relief and did well. The next day I got put into relief against James Madison University and did well again. After that weekend I accepted the role of a relief pitcher and I really enjoyed it. I started a few games here and there but I was in relief almost every game. I think a big adjustment for girls playing Division I is finding out that they are no longer the star of their team anymore. I was lucky enough to find my role and my place on the team early on.

Q: Do athletes at your school get any perks?

A: We get the opportunity to schedule our classes first, but it is essential that we get this opportunity because we have limited time between traveling, games and practice. We also have the option of getting free tutoring. It can be hard juggling classes while playing a Division I sport, so the free tutors are a tool that comes in handy.

Q: Do you have time during the school year to enjoy college life or are you too focused on your studies and softball?

A: During September and October we have a fall ball season so we practice 20 hours a week and do not get much time to do a lot. By November we drop down to 8 hour weeks so we have more free time to focus on our studies and a social life. My family enjoys coming up to visit during 8 hour weeks to go to a Maine football game or a Maine hockey game. When we get back from winter break in January it is pretty much all business. Playing with my best friends makes it a lot of fun though and very enjoyable.

Q: Did you find the recruiting process stressful?

A: I believe that the recruiting process can be a very stressful time



for athletes and their families. I was definitely down on myself a few times during it, but I kept my head up and stayed positive. I think it is best to believe that you will end up where you are meant to be so if something doesn't work out, it is because it happened for a reason.

Q: What advice do you have to our readers about selecting a school and the recruiting process?

A: I think everyone should stay calm and relaxed and trust the process. There is a place for everyone no matter what division the school may be or where the school is. If you are patient and communicate well with coaches and others, then you will end up where you are truly meant to be.

Q: Do you wish that you did anything differently when it comes to the recruiting process?

A: I am truly satisfied with the way everything worked out for me. I wouldn't change anything.

Q: What positions did you play in high school softball? What positions did you play in travel softball? Finally, what positions are you playing now in college?

A: In high school I pitched close to every game at Rocky Point High School from 9th grade to 12th grade. I also hit 4th in the lineup. Pitcher was still my main position in travel ball but I also played outfield, first base and shortstop. I really would go anywhere my coach told me to go. I also hit during travel ball. Now in college I am strictly just a pitcher. I do not hit any more or play any other positions.



Q: What was the transition like between travel ball and college ball?

A: The girls were just a little bit stronger and faster. There is no longer room for mistakes because the competition is good enough to take advantage of them every time. Pitching wise, I had to work on hitting my spots and not leaving the ball anywhere close to the plate. Also, it is a much bigger time commitment. My team wakes up at 5:30am to lift weights and then we have a 3-hour practice later on that day. It's more serious because the standards are higher. We're working every day to get better and win a championship so we hold each other accountable. I think there is just a more serious and mature mindset about success.

Q: What did you find the most difficult to adapt to?

A: The biggest thing I had to work on was having a strong presence being a pitcher. The pitcher sets the tone of the game so I had to work on confidence as a freshman. If a pitcher comes out confident, her teammates behind her will be confident as well. I also had to work a lot on making balls look like strikes. I had to tighten my spins more to fool batters. It's not easy to get the girls out that I have to face, so having a strong sense of confidence and tighter spins has really helped me.

Q: How many players are on your team? Do you feel that the roster size is too small or too large?

A: There are 20 girls on my team. I feel like it is the perfect roster size. We have 4 pitchers and we are all different. We complement each other very well. We are a team made up of athletes which means it is easy for players to change positions. We are not a team that has a set lineup for every game. Whoever is hitting will hit basi-



cally. Coach will also switch around who's in the lineup based on a team we're playing.

Q: Please describe what your Fall season was like.

A: This fall we practiced 20 hours a week. We had off on Tuesdays but we had lift, conditioning and speed work 3-4 times a week and practice every day as well. We would usually scrimmage on the weekends if we did not have games. We went down to Boston University and played a game against them and The University of Rhode Island. A week later we went to Holy Cross and played a double header against them. I try to make my class schedule harder in the fall so I can have a lighter class load during the actual season in the spring. America East playoffs are usually held around the same time as finals week for us in the spring. Last year I had to take an accounting exam in the hotel at Binghamton the day before we won the America East Championship. For the fall semester we are home for finals week and we do not practice the week before so we can completely focus on our classes.

Q: What about your winter schedule? How are the holiday breaks handled? Do you have free time?

A: I have a workout packet for winter break and I'm expected to keep up and be in shape when I come back in January. I have plenty of time to relax and enjoy time with my family though. I am also enrolled in an online winter course so I will only have to take 12 credits during the spring season.

Q: What is your Spring/Summer schedule like for both classes and softball-related activities?

A: On Tuesday we have night practice from 6-9pm in our dome



because classes interfere with practice time during the day. This is important because our whole team can be there to practice without missing classes. On Wednesday, I wake up and have classes from 9:00am-10:45pm and 11:00am-12:45pm. I then have to hustle over to the locker room because we have practice from 1-3:30pm, then lift after that from 4:15-5:15pm. I will go get treatment afterwards in our training room (get iced, massages, etc.) to make sure I am taking care of my body. If we are traveling on the weekend for an away game, I have to notify my professors with a travel letter and miss class on Fridays, sometimes even Thursdays too. I have class at 9:00am on Wednesday so if we come back from a trip Sunday and I return back to campus at 2am, I am still expected to wake up and be in the classroom in the morning.

Q: How many games did you play (Spring/Summer)? How much travelling did you do? How disruptive was this to your studies?

A: I believe last year we had a 56 game schedule. We had a 2-week long trip to Tampa during our school's spring break so we did not miss anything. This season we are going to Tennessee, Arizona State, Utah, Colorado and Montana. It is going to be a very long trip and I believe we are missing a little bit of school so we will have to stay on top of everything and communicate with our professors.

Q: After your school year was over, were you dismissed for summer vacation with any kind of required schedule, training, etc.?

A: We have a month off to let our bodies bounce back after our long season. It is very important to take care of your body and our



coaches realize that. We are emailed a workout packet starting in late June. We are expected to lift and condition all summer. I also pitch with my long-time pitching coach or my dad and work on things that I want to fix from the previous season.

Thank you for sharing this information with our readers, Annie! Currently Division I schools have 12 full scholarships to offer. Usually, these scholarships are divided between most or all of the players on the roster. With a roster of 20, student athletes may be able to get a shared scholarship of approximately 60% (assuming all the players receive an equal scholarship, which is not always the case). As Annie mentioned, she also receives an academic scholarship.



Mitch Alexander is the creator of www.varsityfastpitch.com, a new web site to help students play softball in college. His area of focus is on youth sports and college recruiting. His wife Marie was one of the first female student athletes in the country to play Little League softball after Title IX was passed and played in the first Little League World Series. Over the years, both have managed and coached Little League and select/travel teams at all levels and helped spark a love for softball in their student athletes. Mitch can be reached at Fastpitch2001@varsityfastpitch.com.

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