

Outlaw Hailey Hudson signs with College of Idaho

The summer before her freshman year at Sisters High School (SHS), Hailey Hudson was a key player in helping Central Oregon win the Fastpitch Northwest's Young Division Championship in Centralia, Washington.

During that college exposure event, she pitched, caught and played infield as Central Oregon won four games and defeated Hawaii for the title. That was mid-summer four years ago.

Fastpitch Northwest assistant director and former Sisters High School Coach Tom Mauldin remembers his assessment of Hudson: "She's going to be a four-year Outlaw starter and some day play college softball."

He was partially correct. Injured on the basketball court, Hudson had two knee surgeries midway through her freshman and sophomore years and she was limited to two seasons on the diamond. She was a key Outlaw player both seasons.

But despite losing two prep seasons and two summer softball seasons, Hudson will be playing softball collegiately. She recently signed a National Letter of Intent with the College of Idaho (COI), an NAIA school in Caldwell, Idaho.

"I saw it (Hudson's softball ability) when she was in middle school," said Mauldin. "And I saw again last year (2014) at the Fastpitch Northwest tournament."

Due to two years of rehabbing, Hudson was unable to participate with Fastpitch Northwest events in 2012 and 2013 and missed her freshman and sophomore Outlaw seasons.

"But they (the knees) feel normal now," said Hudson, who recently graduated from

SHS with an honors diploma. "I feel close to 100 percent."

Hudson certainly played like they were 100 percent as she batted .400 and averaged a strikeout per inning during a healthy senior season.

"I felt we came together as a team late in the season, but motivating me was being a senior and I didn't want to go out losing," said Hudson, the daughter of Brett and Cara Hudson.

As a result, the Outlaws won three of their final four games and Hudson pitched gems twice against Junction City, a playoff team.

Hudson believes the mental and physical struggles dealing with ACL surgery on each knee has made her stronger. It also made her appreciate just being able to play.

"Everything associated with the surgery — both times — was draining," said Hudson, a 5-foot-9-inch switch-hitter. "Just the shock of not being able to continue is difficult. Not being able to play gives me less experience than I would have, but it made me the person I am today. I am a stronger person because of it."

"And I appreciate playing so much more. Having to sit out two seasons was the hardest thing. All I could so was watch," she said. "It's just amazing to be able to play."

Despite the surgeries, Hudson managed to letter in volleyball, basketball, and softball and picked up all-league honors in softball and basketball.

Four years ago, Mauldin said he would have projected Hudson as a "future college catcher." With a pair of knee surgeries, catching isn't likely. However, Hudson said, "If they want

me to catch (at COI), I'll do my best. I just can't bend my knees very well."

In her abbreviated career, Hudson has played every position on the softball field, but she has no idea where she will play in college. She simply says, "I'll play anywhere Coach (Al) Mendiola wants me to play."

This last season for the Outlaws, Hudson primarily pitched, but also played every infield position and centerfield.

Hudson said she chose COI because it is a small school and a beautiful campus and because of Coach Mendiola.

"The academics there are very high, and to have an opportunity to play softball and get an education is very exciting," said Hudson, who one day plans to be a physical therapist.

"Coach Mendiola is very funny and I've already embarrassed myself in front of him," she said. "I'm nervous and excited. Moving from 4A high school to college is a big jump, but I'm getting ready for it and the new challenge it will bring."

The College of Idaho is a member of the Cascade Collegiate Conference and won 19-31 games last season with a young team. In 2014, the Coyotes finished fifth in the Nation and graduated 10 seniors.

Under Mendiola, the Lady Yotes have made six postseason appearances, including



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

Haylie Hudson has signed to play softball at College of Idaho.

the 2006, 2007, 2009, 2013 and 2014 CCC tournaments; the 2007 and 2008 NAIA Region I tournaments; and berths in the 2008, 2009, 2013 and 2014 NAIA Softball National Championships.

Hudson has already begun preparing for her freshman year in college with weight training and in two weeks will begin regular workouts with several other Central Oregon girls who play college softball.

"But I am also preparing myself mentally and emotionally to leave home," she said. "Not having my parents and constant support system will be very new. It's exciting, but scary."

Hudson said she felt Sisters High School offered her a great opportunity for diversity, and enabled her to be herself.

"It really helped me to

know who I am."

Move-in date for COI is August 27, and she will be rooming with another softball player. A week later, school and softball begin.

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— Hailey Hudson

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Father's Day Brunch

Two Seatings: 10 a.m. and 12:30

Will include prime rib, french toast, hashbrowns, scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage and peach cobbler.

\$25 per adult. \$12.50 for kids 4 and older

Father's Day Dinner

We will be serving Asian BBQ pork ribs, corn bread, grilled yams, Waldorf salad and Leah's homemade cupcakes! Dinner will be served family-style at 6 p.m. and can be paired with Lake Creek's own red or white wine blends which are quickly becoming a local favorite!

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