

Sisters athlete sets sights on 'next level'

By Tom Mauldin
Correspondent

Amanda Smith is discovering how important extra effort is.

She has seen it pay off during her sophomore softball season at Sisters High School when she was named second-team all-Sky-Em League. Now she is putting in motion a plan to see just how far that extra work will take her.

"I'm now giving time outside of regular season practice," said the six-foot Smith, who pitches and plays first base. "I'm taking private (pitching) lessons, doing a lot of drills and practices at home on my own, and my goal is to develop more as a pitcher, as well as a player."

Smith's dream is to play college softball and follow in her father Dave's footsteps as a collegiate athlete. He was a college defensive lineman, and she knows to get to that level requires more than dreams. Hard work and a plan of action are necessary to reach the next level.

Smith is ready for the challenge.

A month after the Outlaw softball season ended, Smith attended a Fastpitch Northwest Prospect Evaluation Camp (PEC) at Redmond High School. She was one of 20 Central Oregon incoming freshman to be put through a series of day-long tests known as SPARQ (Speed,

Power, Agility, Reaction and Quickness) and the NFCA (National Fastpitch Coaches Association) Comparatives.

"I want to become a more control pitcher ... being consistent," said Smith as to why the PEC was her next step. "I want to play softball beyond high school. I want to have more confidence. Since I started the private lessons, I have a more serious aspect about the sport. I am in the developing stages of having college options."

It was a good decision for Smith.

The SPARQ testing, unveiled by Nike in 2004, tests players on their foot speed, shuttle quickness, vertical jump and power ball throw. The results go into a national database and college coaches can visit player profiles to gather prospect information, as well as track growth of potential players.

The NFCA testing included arm strength, home-to-first and home-to-home speed, bat speed (exit speed of the ball coming off the bat) and pitching speeds.

The rest of the six-hour evaluation included professionals rating player hitting, fielding, throwing and pitching.

Ken Olson, director of Fastpitch Northwest, said "it's no secret, the stronger, quicker and faster an athlete becomes, the better on-field performance they will have. SPARQ is a great way for

college coaches to view yearly growth. It's part of the process, as is being evaluated by an independent professional evaluator."

The goal for Smith and the others around the Northwest was to get invited to Fastpitch NW's College Exposure Tournament held in Centrailia, Washington.

And to her delight, Smith was invited.

She was placed on a team with players from around the Northwest and Hawaii. They played five games in three days in front of 31 college coaches.

"It was pretty scary the first day," admitted Smith. "I was very nervous. Knowing that I was playing in front of college coaches was very nerve-racking. The best part of the Fastpitch Northwest tournament was playing with a team I had never met before, and by the second inning of the first game it was like we had known each other forever. It is amazing how a common goal can really bring a group together. It really showed in our performance."

"All the girls just met, and I really didn't know what to expect," added Smith. "But being on a team where everyone has the same passion as you was amazing. Everybody



PHOTO PROVIDED

Amanda Smith, third from left, is upping her game in softball.

was supportive of everyone else because they know they want the same thing. When we got comfortable, we were on fire."

Smith was chosen to open in the circle for her team of new teammates and her nervousness showed. She struggled for two innings, but college coaches were noticing "flashes of big potential."

College of Idaho Head Coach Al Mendiola nicknamed Smith the "Baby Giraffe."

"Once it all develops, well, let's just say she is going to be very impressive," Mendiola said. "What's not to like? She's doing things the right way and loves the game."

Day 2 went much better for Smith (five shutout innings and nine strikeouts). And in each game, a few more college

coaches were taking notes.

Day 3 of the tournament was another step in the process and she finished the tournament with 16 strikeouts in nine-plus innings.

Smith is now on the radar of college coaches.

"It was a great experience," said the left-handed pitcher.

Smith, who is the daughter of David and Michelle Smith, is a relatively young pitcher. Prior to moving to Sisters from Santa Rosa, California, in 2012, she pitched on a youth travel team, but took a few years off and did not play her freshman year at Sisters due to family health issues.

"I didn't play as a freshman, but (I'm) glad I did as a sophomore," said Smith. "I love Sisters High School. It is amazing."

Gordon's Last Touch
541-549-3008
Cleaning Specialists For...
Carpets • Upholstery
Windows • Snow Removal!
Accepting VISA & MasterCard!
Member of the Better Business Bureau
Serving Central Oregon Since 1980
Bonded & Insured

Salon Renaissance
R
Come In...
Relax...Enjoy!
Tim Westcott
Ronnica Westcott
Jenny Duey
Mary Morgan
541-588-6611
220 W. Cascade Ave.
Come in, Relax, Enjoy!

Brace Yourself for Summer!
\$300 Discount
For the month of August when you start a comprehensive treatment program!
Not valid with any other offer. New Patients Only.
THE BRACE PLACE
Central Oregon Orthodontic Specialists
541-382-0410
410 E. Cascade Ave., Sisters
Smile by Marissa and The Brace Place!
CentralOregonBracePlace.com

Live
AT BLACK BUTTE RANCH
PATRICK LAMB
FRIDAY, AUGUST 14, 5-7pm
Adults \$18 | 6-12 \$12 | 5 & under FREE
Enjoy the venue with a view and the extraordinary talent of the Patrick Lamb Band at our Lakeside lawn concert.
Black Butte Ranch
TICKETS AVAILABLE ONLINE AT BENDTICKET.COM.
855-318-3967 | BLACKBUTTERANCH.COM | 7 MILES WEST OF SISTERS

Save Energy, Time and Money with the **Dynamic Daikin Ductless Heat Pump System!**
As low as \$2,395 with monthly payments as low as \$49!
Greater efficiency and energy savings at lower costs • State-of-the-art inverter technology • Stylish solutions
100% satisfaction guaranteed • Full 12-year parts warranty • The ONLY company that makes this offer!
Proudly serving Central Oregon since 1953
For more information call 541-382-1231
www.BendHeating.com
BEND HEATING & SHEETMETAL, INC.
As an Energy Trust of Oregon trade ally, we can help you access cash incentives to make it easier to improve your home's energy efficiency.