

Former Outlaws shine on college diamonds

By Tom Mauldin
Correspondent

A pair of former Sisters High School softball players have added their names to the list of ex-Outlaws who have made an impact for their college softball teams.

Walla Walla Community College freshman Amanda Smith and College of Idaho junior Haylie Hudson are playing key roles in the success of their teams this spring.

Smith, a 6-1 left-handed pitcher and right-handed hitter, has made an immediate impact at WWCC. She is second in the Northwest Athletic Conference in home runs, with 17 (one behind the leader). The Warriors are 35-11 overall and tied for second with a 23-7 record in the NWAC's East Region.

Hudson, a right-handed pitcher and a left-handed hitter, is the Coyotes' closer and in 12 innings has posted a career-best 3.71 ERA. COI finished the season 22-23 overall and 11-16 in the Cascade Collegiate Conference.

COI Head Coach Al Mendiola pointed out that the closer role is a difficult one. Closers often are brought into the game with runners on base or to face the other team's top hitter. "It's not an easy role," said the long-time coach.

"She has been successful because she now knows her role and has accepted her role on the staff," said Mendiola. "She seems more confident when she is in the circle, and she doesn't try to do too much."

As an Outlaw, Hudson was a starter when healthy. She suffered two severe knee injuries that limited her softball time to less than two full seasons at SHS. Only recently at COI has she been playing without a bulky knee brace.

Like all pitchers, Hudson wants innings — and a lot of them. Closers don't get many innings.

In a recent game against Oregon Institute of Technology, Hudson was

brought in primarily to face one batter — Tara Moates, arguably the top hitter in the CCC. She induced Moates to groundout and end an OIT threat.

"It has taken me time to understand how my role impacts the team, but I have begun to realize that it is an important aspect that is needed," said Hudson.

Smith was recently named NWAC Player of the Week for the last week of March when she drove in 16 runs as WWCC went 4-2. Though she has made a pair of starts including a shutout, she also has been used in the closer role and has responded impressively.

Twice recently in one-run WWCC leads, Smith came in to pitch with the tying run on third and no outs. Relying on her downward movement pitches, those runners did not score and WWCC picked up a pair of wins.

"She gets better each week," said Warrior Pitching

Coach Tom Mauldin. "If she continues to display the type of work ethic she's shown this year, she'll certainly develop into one of the NWAC's top pitchers."

But while her pitching is opening eyes, her hitting has been making headlines.

In 45 games, Smith is hitting .374 with 17 homers and 54 runs batted in. She has a three-homer game and in one game, homered twice in the first inning. In 15 games pitching, she is 2-3 with a pair of saves, a 4.63 ERA and in 39 innings has struck out 30 batters.

"Her work ethic has increased as she has had success and has seen how putting in extra time is paying off for her," said WWCC Head Coach Justin Speer. "Amanda has no doubt been an impact player for us. She really brings a lot of things to help our program have success."

A three-time all-Sky-Em Conference player, Smith said she loves being part of the

Warrior softball program.

"I love being on the Warrior softball team because the competition is at a different level than I have ever seen, and constantly forces me to push myself and become a better player," said Smith. "I love my role, and being able to pick my team up helps me keep myself up at the same time. Letting them know that their hard work does not go unnoticed inspires me to work harder. Being able to form a bond with these girls inspires me to better myself every day, on and off the field."



PHOTO PROVIDED

Haylie Hudson is a closer.

Hudson, who was a three-sport athlete at SHS, has pitched 12 innings and has a 3.71 ERA. She is 1-1 with a

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Amanda Smith is an impact player.

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