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CATCHER

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Miss and Oregon.

"I had fun when I was up here," Poore said of her recruiting trips. "But I went to Ole Miss and I had a lot of fun."

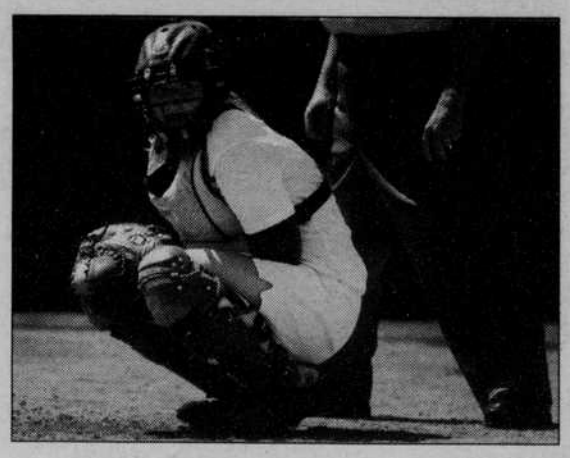
In the Southeastern Conference, Poore was a freshman with a strong bat and smart glove. She led the Rebels with a .309 batting average that season, starting 49 of their 58 games.

She had one home run and a .974 fielding percentage, and she was named an Easton third-team All-American despite the team's 18-40 record.

"It was a good opportunity for me to start right away and get good experience in," Poore said. "I didn't realize how hard it was going to be for me to be that far away."

Approximately 100 miles south of Poore, a Mississippi State coach was noticing good things coming from the freshman who played for the Bulldogs' in-state rival.

"I remember her being a .300 hitter, and I remember her being a talented young player," said Arendsen, who then was in her fifth season coaching Mississippi State. "I remember her leaving (Mississippi), but I didn't know where she went."



Jenn Poore originally went to Mississippi, but came to Oregon because she believed "it was just meant to be." Oregon head coach Kathy Arendsen coached against Poore while Arendsen was at Mississippi State.

Danielle Hickey
Photo Editor

When Poore realized Mississippi wasn't where she wanted to be, she knew there was one place to go. Poore called up Oregon's then-head coach Rick Gamez.

"He remembered recruiting me," Poore said. "They had an opening, so I came up here. I think it was just meant to be."

Shortly after Poore made the trek to Eugene, Gamez was out and assistant Brent Rincon was in. Rincon stayed for one season before the Mississippi paths crossed again, this time when Arendsen was named head coach at Oregon in July 2002.

"I was pleased to see (Poore) was here," Arendsen said. "I knew that she was a quality player, so I knew that we had a real strong player behind the plate that we could build with. She's just been outstanding, everything we could hope for and more."

Playing in the SEC as a freshman is usually difficult, but the SEC falls second to Poore's current home, the Pac-10, when it comes to difficult softball conferences.

Now, as a senior on the No. 11 Oregon program, Poore has seen a swing from a two-win Pac-10 season to the Ducks' current position: tied for second place in the conference. Part of that success can be traced to Poore.

"She's a very smart catcher," Oregon pitcher Ani Nyhus said. "She calls her own game for the most part, and she's very confident about what she calls. I've only shooken her off twice, and both times she gave me the new signal. I threw a different pitch and after, we talked about why.

"She was very sure that there was a reason why she wanted to throw that pitch. That's huge because a lot of catchers get used to the coaches calling or just getting in a pattern, and I don't think that she does that."

Poore is a rare breed of catcher, even at the Division I level. She routinely calls games herself, selecting the pitches for each batter and each situation. She studies teams and players, and discusses the game plan with the coaches each day.

As serious as she is when she gets behind the plate or in the box, Poore is also a leader on the team because she makes everyone feel more relaxed.

"Jenn is funny," Nyhus said. "She finds a way to let everyday life and humor take away the bad things. If we're tired of practice — we've been there all day and it's the end — she'll just make some comment about 'Oh, got to go tarp the field now.' She finds a way to see the brighter side of things."

That easygoing nature is part of her ability to adapt as well as she does. This summer, Poore will again adapt to another part of the United States. This time? Ohio.

Her future in softball will continue after her Oregon career ends in May. She was selected as the No. 9 overall pick by the Akron (Ohio) Racers in the National Pro Fastpitch college draft on Dec. 6. The NPF's season opens in June.

"I've been playing for so long, I just can't imagine my life without it," Poore said.

Until then, Poore will continue to adapt to anything that Arendsen, and Oregon's opponents, throws at her — even a run at the Women's College World Series.

Contact the senior sports reporter at mindirice@dailyemerald.com.

"Best Meal for a Deal," 2nd Place, "Best Omelette, 2nd Place, "Best Breakfast" 2nd Place, "Best Vegetarian Fare" 2nd Place, Register-Guard, 1987 • "Best Breakfast," In Town Magazine, 1995 • "Best Breakfast," In Town Magazine, 1995 • Ten Choice, Oregon Daily Emerald, 1995 • "Before 9 a.m.," Comic News • "Best Dinner Under $8," Eugene Weekly, 1996 • "One of 101 Cool Things to Do," Register-Guard, 1998 • "Best Dinner Under $8," "Best Place to Take Visitors Where," 1st Place, "Best Breakfast," 1st Place, "Best Sunday Lunch," 2nd Place "Best Lunch Under $8," 1st Place, "Best Family Dining," 2nd Place, Eugene Weekly, 1999 • "Best Dinner Under $12," 1st Place, "Best Under $8," 1st Place, "Best Breakfast," 2nd Place, "Best Soup," 3rd Place Eugene Weekly, 2001 • "Best Breakfast," Best of Teen, Register-Guard, 2001 • Below, 2001 • "Best Breakfast," 2nd Place, "Best Mean Eats," 2nd Place, "Best Soup," 2nd Place, Eugene Weekly, 2002 • "Best Comfort Food," 2nd Place; "Best Soup," 2nd Place; "Best Breakfast," 3rd Place; "Best Mean Eats," 10th Place, Eugene Weekly, 2003.

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