

SPORTS

Life-long learning pays off for softball catcher

College-bound Maddie Troutt taking her game to a new level

By Mark Gibson
Columbia Gorge News

THE DALLES GRADUATE senior Maddie Troutt isn't sure when she first got interested in playing ball. "Probably like when I was 4," she says, at a guess. Her stepdad, Leroy Tharp, was a baseball coach working with teams in Gresham, Hood River Valley and The Dalles. "She was a field rat, so to speak," he explained. "She definitely grew up on a baseball field."

"It was an exciting thing to go to," Maddie remembers.

She entered the game on her own account at age 8 with Cherry City Crush, a traveling softball organization based in The Dalles.

"I've played ever since," she said.

Asked to take on the catcher roll early on, Maddie declined. "I didn't like all the gear, and it was just overwhelming," she recalls. Yet somehow her coach, Roger Hoylman, managed to capture a video of her promising to be a catcher someday.

And she did — a good one.

Playing her senior year this spring for The Dalles Riverhawks, Maddie was named Intermountain Conference (IMC) first team catcher and was a player of the year candidate, and was Oregon's Class 5A all-state catcher as well.

As a freshman and sophomore, she was named IMC all league, second team catcher and led Oregon's 5A school teams in home runs as a sophomore. Her junior season in 2020 was cancelled due to the pandemic.

Maddie has also been a winner at every age group in travel softball: The 10U Cherry City Crush team was state ASA runner-up; the 12U Cherry City Crush was the state ASA champion; the 14U Cherry City Crush was second in state ASA and NAFA national champion (she was a first team, all-tournament selection); and at the 16U level, she has traveled the county playing the nation's best competition for the Oregon Blaze 18U Gold Team.

Maddie has been running softball games from behind the plate for



Graduated The Dalles High School senior Maddie Troutt stands for a photo at 16th Street Ballpark in The Dalles.

Mark B. Gibson photo

"Coaches have always trusted me to handle the game, call the pitches. I've been taught really well, and coaches can't see what I can see, being right there."

Maddie Troutt
Intermountain Conference first team catcher

years now.

"I like being involved in every pitch. I would get really bored when I was younger. Outfielder? I could not do that," she said.

As a catcher, her coaches learned to trust her in calling the pitches and running the game. Maddie is fascinated by the complexity of it all.

"You look at the batter, the way they swing, where they stand in

the box, the angles they hit at. You see if they are pulling or casting, and where they hit. You're studying batter tendencies," she said.

And pitchers, as well. "You have to know the strengths and weaknesses of the pitcher," she said. "Pitchers are ... sensitive," she said. "During the game, if they are struggling, I'll go out there and encourage them, maybe tell a joke, get them to laugh and relax. Get

their mind off their bad pitches, and onto good pitches." The relationship between the pitcher and the catcher is probably the most important relationship on the field. "You have to trust each other," she said.

With her knowledge of the pitcher and the batters, Maddie also directs the fielders during games. "As a catcher, you can literally see the whole field," she explained.

For Maddie, running a game is nothing unusual. "Coaches have always trusted me to handle the game, call the pitches. I've been taught really well, and coaches can't see what I can see, being right there."

In the thick of it on defense as a catcher, Maddie is also the best of defensive player on The Dalles softball

team. She led all 5A school teams in home runs as a sophomore, and although softball was cancelled due to the pandemic her junior year, she made her mark in her senior year, leading the team in home runs and hitting the longest home run known to have ever been made at the 16th Street ballpark: It went over the fence — over the trees — over the power lines and onto the junior varsity field below.

Having graduated from The Dalles High School on Saturday, Maddie was travelling again by Thursday: this time to Stansfield University, where she will, of course, take up spring residence at the ball field.

Missed free throws the difference as Riverhawks fall to Ravens in IMC playoffs

Brandon Risley
For Columbia Gorge News

In game that looked much different than the final score, missed opportunities were the story for The Dalles Riverhawks as they fell, 48-38, to the Ridgeview Ravens in the first round of the Intermountain Conference Playoffs.

The two teams split their season series with each winning on their home court. The latest matchup had come four days prior when the Riverhawks (3-9 overall, 3-7 league) defeated the Ravens 49-40 in the final game of the regular season.

On one of the hottest days of the year so far, the temperature inside Kurtz Gym matched that of the nearly 100-degree weather outside which led to some sloppy play early on. The ruckus crowd helped the teams bring out their intensity, especially on the defensive end. But neither side was able to find any

rhythm scoring the ball.

By the end of the first quarter the scoring had picked up a little bit leading to a one-point Riverhawks lead at the break. The Riverhawks struggled immensely to put the ball in the hoop in the second period, going nearly five minutes without a field goal. The defensive intensity was there but every time they created a turnover and runout, they were unable to capitalize on the offensive end. The Ravens (5-9, 3-7) went on 11-0 run that saw the Riverhawks miss five free throws in a row before making one that ended the Ravens run. With the Ravens taking a 22-17 lead into the half, the difference was the Riverhawks' inability to convert their free throws, going 2 for 9 in the quarter.

In the third quarter the Riverhawks changed their strategy offensively and started using their size to their advantage. After having a quiet first half, Riverhawk

senior Spencer Taylor came to life scoring six straight points during an 8-0 run that tied the game early in the period. The Riverhawks didn't score the remainder of the quarter and continued to struggle from the foul line. Neither team was able to create a substantial run in the final period and both teams continued to struggle from the free throw line. With just under two minutes left the Ravens had a six-point and were at the line to potentially ice the game but missed both attempts. The Riverhawks couldn't capitalize and a subsequent turnover lead to an easy Raven basketball to clinch the win.

Raven sophomore Peyton Zampko led the way for his team with 12 points, while Taylor also finished with a team-high 12 for the Riverhawks. The Ravens ultimately fell to No. 1 seed and undefeated Crook County (15-0, 10-0 League) 59-47 in the second round.



The Dalles senior Spencer Taylor makes a pass in Kurtz gym action earlier this season. Taylor scored six points in a 8-0 second half run by the Riverhawks, but was unable to turn the tide in their Intermountain Conference first round playoff game against the Ravens.

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