



NEWS RELEASE

NORTHLAND PREP'S KILPATRICK GOOD EXAMPLE OF STUDENT-ATHLETE

PHOENIX, AZ (June 5, 2009) – When Kayla Kilpatrick heads off to college at the University of Utah this fall, she will face a number of challenges. They will seem less insurmountable as the result of some of the challenges she faced and overcame at Northland Preparatory Academy in Flagstaff.

Kilpatrick grew up playing in Flagstaff's city youth softball leagues, but Northland, a Class 1A school, did not have a softball team. With the help of some fellow students, she urged the administration to get a team up and running.

That finally came about two years ago, in her sophomore season. The team struggled its first two years, playing a junior-varsity schedule, then posted a 16-6 record in 2009 with a mixed varsity-JV schedule. A full varsity schedule is in the works for next season.

Kilpatrick was the team captain and MVP this year, leading the way from her shortstop spot with a .492 batting average, 32 hits, 32 runs scored, five home runs and 28 RBIs.

She also excelled academically and was the school's valedictorian during graduation ceremonies on May 30.

So which was more difficult, helping start a softball team from scratch or speaking in front of a large audience at graduation?

"Getting the softball team going," she said, laughing. "It was really tough at first. But we (students and some coaches, including her parents who served as assistants) kept pushing for it and it turned out OK."

Although Kilpatrick has pitched on a few occasions, shortstop is where she feels the most comfortable.

"I just have a better sense of the game, know how to react. You're in control of the infield most of the time," she said.

Northland coach Len Spiess called Kilpatrick "a complete player and person. I saw her make plays that collegiate players make.

"She was a great kid. She was always talking up, lifting up her teammates. We had a few new players this year, and she would always be willing to help them. That's what being a leader is all about."

Kilpatrick also participated on a city ski team a few years ago but did not continue, due in part to the fact that the Flagstaff area had little snow for a couple of winters and the team had to travel virtually every weekend.

And she took up fencing, which has helped with her hand-eye coordination on the softball field. Wielding the swords helped strengthen her arm for better throws, she said.

Kilpatrick has continued to strengthen her skills in academics. She had straight A's this year and lists mathematics and science as her favorite areas of study.

She has been a prime example of what the Arizona Interscholastic Association likes to see in a student-athlete. The AIA will be looking to recognize students with similar credentials in the 2009-10 school year.

“Softball has been a great experience,” Kilpatrick said. “I have been able to meet more people than I would have if I didn’t play. It has helped me understand time management and realize what I need to do to get several things accomplished at the same time. Also setting goals and working ahead.”

All of those skills should help her as she enters college, where she hopes to major in biomedical engineering. She plans to play softball at the club level and might attempt to try out for Utah’s team, but remains undecided on that at this point.

Have a Story Idea:

The AIA is looking for story ideas on member high schools, including its student-athlete, coaches and administrators. Have a story that you think should be shared with the AIA community? Email your idea to Don Ketchum at dketchum@aiaonline.org.