



Right on the sweet spot



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press
Former Colby Community College basketball player Ethan Stover hammered a pitch during Colby Bowl's co-ed softball league game against McCarty's on Sunday at the Colby Recreation Fields. The league is run by the Colby Recreation Department.

Multi-sport athletes recognized at reunion

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Seven of the eight living 12-letter winners at Colby High School got together for the first time at the all-school reunion in June. Each was introduced to the crowd at the reunion

Ah, the stories they had to tell.

Twelve-letter winners are those who earned a letter every semester in all four years of high school in three sports. The seven lettermen at the reunion represented a range of age groups: former Green Bay Packers linebacker Nelson Toburen, class of 1957; Colby Community College basketball coach Dustin Pfeifer, 2000; Summar Stephens, 2003; Matt Augustine and Emily Sloan, 2005; Lissa Mazanec, 2008; and Nathan Reed, 2010.

Danny Sporing, 2007, was not able to attend. The three deceased letter winners are Frank Loftus, 1933; Lynn McNutt, 1941; and Jim Withers, 1945. All are featured in Gary Adrian's book, "Flight of the Eagles."

Toburen is arguably the most high-profile name in the group. He played football, basketball and track in high school.

Toburen was drafted by the Packers in 1960 after playing football for Wichita University. Green Bay won the NFL championship game – there was no Super Bowl at the time – during his first season in 1961.

He suffered a career-ending neck injury in a game against the Baltimore Colts in 1962 while tackling the legendary quarterback Johnny Unitas.

Toburen was coached by Vince Lombardi during his years at Green Bay, and played with hall-

of-famers such as linebacker Ray Nitsche, quarterback Bart Starr and halfback Paul Hornung.

The former pro linebacker said he enjoyed the camaraderie and the overall fun experience of high school sports. He said he never had more fun playing sports.

"It was really, really enjoyable," he said. "We had a good group."

Pfeifer played five sports during his years as an Eagle: football, basketball, track, cross country and baseball. He will be heading into his second year as coach of the Trojans' basketball team this winter.

Stephens played four years of volleyball, basketball and track. She played one year of basketball at Colby Community College and one at Kansas Wesleyan University in Salina.

Stephens said two of her most memorable high school moments were when her for 4-by-800 relay team came from behind to take first in the state track championships and when her volleyball team beat Goodland for the first time in a long time.

Augustine competed in four sports: cross country, football, basketball and baseball. He went on to pitch for Fort Hays State University.

Sloan ran cross country and track and played basketball. In Adrian's book, she said her best track season was her sophomore year when her relay team took first at state in the 4-by-800 even though she had to run with a broken toe. The girls' basketball team made the state tournament all four years of her career.

Sporing wrestled and ran cross country and track for the Eagles. He went on to run for the Colby Community Colleges cross country and track teams. He was

named most valuable player on the Trojans' team in indoor and outdoor track.

Mazanec ran track and played volleyball and basketball. The girls basketball team won the state championship during her junior season.

"We were pretty focused on what we wanted to accomplish," she said. "We really meshed."

Mazanec won the state championship in the discus during her sophomore season. She went on to throw the discus and hammer in her first three semesters at Brown University in Rhode Island.

Reed wrestled and ran cross country and track during high school. He took fifth at the state wrestling tournament his junior year at 112 pounds and finished third at state his senior year. He said his most memorable sports moment was making the state wrestling tournament his freshman year at 103 pounds.

Reid said he is thinking about wrestling for the Trojans this fall, but he has yet to make a decision.

Girls softball squad performs well at state

The Sweet Thunder, Colby's girls 12-and-under softball team, finished its season on a positive note, posting a 3-2 record in the state tournament last weekend.

The team has 11 players from Colby and one from Brewster. The 11 girls who traveled to Topeka (Brielle McKee of Brewster was on vacation) dropped the first game in the double-elimination tournament to the Wichita X-Plosion on Friday, then strung together three straight victories before they were eliminated by a second loss to the X-Plosion on Saturday.

Coach Alan Sager said he was pleasantly surprised with the way his team played.

"Everything came together this weekend," he said. "They put their offense and defense together for the first time all year.

The squad lost to the X-Plosion 9-8 in the first game.

Wichita jumped out to a 3-0 lead in the first. The Thunder had a big six-run inning in the top of the second. They scored two more in the fourth to go up 8-3, but the X-Plosion put up six runs in the bottom of the fourth and escaped with a 9-8 victory.

Darby Sager had two singles. Desi Schippers pitched all four innings.

The girls bounced back from

their loss and beat the Salina ShaBam 4-3. The Thunder picked up one run in the second and two more in the third to go up 3-0. Salina got two runs in the fourth, cutting the lead to 3-2. ShaBam picked up another run in the top of the fifth, tying the game at 3. But Tessa Krzycki drove in Cayla Carter with a single in the bottom half of the inning, giving the girls a 4-3 win.

Sager had two singles.

Danielle Foster pitched a perfect game and the girls clobbered the Abilene Attack 17-0 in the next game. Foster struck out six in four innings.

"She was on fire," Sager said.

The Thunder ticked off eight runs in the second and put up two more in the fourth. The girls scored seven more in the fourth and picked up a 17-0 win.

Krzycki and Schippers each had a single and a double and Sager and Carter had two singles each.

The Thunder recorded its third straight victory by beating Quick-silver from Great Bend 8-4 at 4:30 p.m. on a humid and muggy Saturday afternoon.

"They were hot and tired and we were hot and tired," Sager said. "It was about who wanted it more."

Sager said he and fellow coaches Andy Schippers and Donald

Zerr had to pour water on the girls necks throughout the game because of the humidity.

The girls got off to a quick start, scoring three runs in the first. They tacked on three more in the third. Great Bend scored four in the third to make it 6-4. The Thunder managed to get two more runners across home in the fourth and won the game 8-4.

Sager had a great day, going 3-for-3 at the plate. Gabbie Wilson doubled. Foster threw for 2 1/3 innings and gave up four runs. Schippers gave up no runs in 1 2/3 innings.

The Wichita handed The Thunder a 6-3 defeat in the fifth game, ending their winning streak and season.

The X-Plosion picked up the first run in the bottom of the second. The Colby girls scored three in the top of the third, giving them a 3-1 lead. Wichita had a five-run inning in the bottom half of the inning to make it 6-3 X-Plosion. Colby wasn't able to score in the top of the third and Wichita picked up the win.

The Thunder finished with a 16-12 record. Sager said coaches Schippers and Zerr had both been helpful to the Thunder's progress this season.

Star softball pitcher to retire

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) – Olympic gold medalist Jennie Finch announced Tuesday that she will retire next month, bringing an end to a 10-year career in which she helped softball blossom in the United States.

The dominating pitcher will play her final games with the U.S. national team this week at the World Cup of Softball in Oklahoma City. She'll then finish the rest of the National Pro Fastpitch season with the Chicago Bandits before calling it quits at the age of 29 to focus on her family.

The 6-foot-2 Finch was a standout at Arizona before becoming an icon with the U.S. team, going 32-0 her junior year and putting together 60 consecutive wins both NCAA records. She won gold at the 2004 Olympics in Athens and silver four years later in Beijing.

This month, she helped the U.S. win its seventh straight world championship.

"This whole career has been way more than I ever even imagined or dreamed," Finch said in an interview with The Associated Press. "The opportunities that I'd be able to enjoy and appreciate and be a part of, it's been incredible."

Finch was much more than a pretty face as she took over for Lisa Fernandez as the most recognized player in a sport enjoying growing popular-

ity. Her 60-game run stretched over nearly two years and included the 2001 WCWS title, a dominance that carried over to the national team, where she combined with the likes of Fernandez and Cat Osterman to make up the world's best pitching rotation through the early part of the decade.

"For Jennie Finch, she's a stud on the field and everyone's going to love her while she's playing but no one is going to forget her because of the person that she is," U.S. outfielder Jessica Mendoza said. "That is what she has over almost any other person that's at the top of their sport."

"She's the most popular person in our sport. How many other sports can you say that their most popular player is the best person to the fans than anyone else?"

Coupled with her softball skills, Finch's beauty and charm landed her a place in pop culture. She struck out some of the big leagues' best hitters in appearances on "This Week in Baseball," competed on "Celebrity Apprentice" and made the rounds on late-night talk shows.

"She set the standard for softball in a new era of being able to be feminine and play this sport," Mendoza said.

Finch, who will turn 30 in September, said it's time to turn her focus to her family.



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