



Experience key for Knappenberger

Knoch softball pitcher looking for big things in 2018

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Celia Knappenberger, a senior pitcher on the Knoch softball team, is looking to cap her career with team and individual success.

DAVE PRELOSKY/BUTLER EAGLE

JEFFERSON TWP — Celia Knappenberger brings a wealth of experience to the pitching circle.

Knoch's top hurler is hoping that translates to individual and team success in 2018.

The senior began starting games as a freshman and compiled a 21-8 record over the last three seasons.

"The thing that comes naturally for Celia is throwing strikes," said Knoch coach and Celia's father, Tim Knappenberger. "Last year, she had 83 strikeouts and 10 walks. She is our go-to girl and she knows that.

"You have to want to win and I can go back to when she was playing rec ball. I knew then that Celia was a competitor. There's a lot of pressure on high school girls, especially when it comes to the playoffs, but she has always been calm and collected."

A strong passion for the game fuels Celia's desire to keep improving.

"My older sisters (Chloe and Lucy) began playing softball before me and my dad coached," she said. "When I first stepped on the field, I fell in love with the game."

Celia began playing travel ball when she was 10. Outside of Knoch's high school team, she now plays for the Steel City Cyclones.

"Playing in so many travel ball games, it's helped me in every way possible," she said. "I've been in so many different game situations and that helps to push me. It makes me work harder."

Some pitchers can rely heavily on a dominating fastball. That is not the case for Celia.

"She doesn't throw over 60 mph," Tim Knappenberger said. "She's not going to overwhelm hitters with her speed, so she's constantly working on the spin and location of her pitches. She has really improved in those areas."

Prior to this year, Celia's pitches included a fastball, change-up, curveball, screwball and a drop. She has added a riseball to her arsenal. It may help her improve on an already-stingy 1.09 ERA from last season.

"It's definitely the hardest pitch I've learned to throw," she said. "I worked on it all summer and hopefully, I will be able to use it when I need to in games."

When not pitching, Celia plays first base and in the outfield, but she wanted to contribute at the plate as well. That proved to be a challenge as she batted around .200 as a freshman. But over the last two seasons, she has become an offensive leader as well. As a junior, she batted .423 with five doubles, four triples and a pair of home runs.

"I never did well at the plate when I was younger," she said. "Pitching and defense, that's one half of the game, but hitting is the other half. I wanted to help the team with my bat and it's really satisfying to do that."

Celia has committed to extending her academic and athletic career at St. Vincent College in Latrobe, but hopes to first make this spring one to remember at Knoch.

"We want to win the section title outright," Celia said. "Getting to states, that would be amazing."



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