

Sports & OUTDOORS

SOFTBALL

Local athletes take time to talk Softball strategy

BY CHRIS FIEL

CHARLEVOIX COUNTY — Recently, I reached out to a number of area softball players to chat about strategy, how they got involved in the sport, what kept them involved, and asked the mto describe some fun and memorable moments.

Taking part in the survey was Boyne City's Maggee Behling, Katelyn Gabos, Brooklyn Fitzpatrick and Josee Behling; Charlevoix's Grace Lentz, Madelyn Sandison, Zoe Brodin and Krista Dorst; along with East Jordan's Ellie Skrocki and Molly Kitson.

Here are the questions, for some with lengthy answers, I have summed up the response for the group.

1. If you had to make a line-up (with your current team) – both

batting order and field positions – for a game that your team MUST WIN, what would it look like? Things to think about. Would you bat

everyone? Which players play the best in which positions? Where would you bat yourself and why? What position would you play? Is that your

current position, if not, why the switch?

Not surprisingly, each of the young ladies positioned themselves in the lineup where they have had recent success, either in high school or travel ball, and from what I have witnessed over their careers, I would have put them in the same line-ups spots as well as in their defensive positions.

2. What are some of the top skills you think all teams need to work on in practice? Does your current team work on those?

(DORST): Top skills every team should work on is batting and throwing, and those are the basic skills for soft-

ball but also the most important ones. If you don't ever practice hitting, you won't gain power which won't help you get on base. Without practicing throwing, your arm won't get stronger and you won't be able to throw it as far as other players. These are both such important skills to work on every day if you can because the more practice, the stronger and better you will get. Our team works on these skills all the time, sometimes we will break off into groups and develop these skills so when game day comes around, we will be able to crush the other team.

(LENTZ): I think in practice it is very important to work on basic fielding and hitting but also to break certain plays down and run them through many times so that when a game comes we can execute the plays, having



Madelyn Sandison, Charlevoix Rayders

minimal errors. Our current team works on this in practice and I think it has helped the success of our team, especially when we need to execute in high pressure games and tournaments.

(BRODIN): I would use this



Josee Behling, Boyne City Ramblers

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AREA SPRING SPORTS HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETE FEATURE PROFILES

During the spring and summer we are featuring spring sports athletes from area schools since the spring sports seasons were cancelled.

Our target is to feature one male athlete and one female athlete from each school in our distribution area each

week. In most cases we will try and feature a Senior athlete first.

The Charlevoix County News covers Boyne City,

Boyne Falls, Charlevoix, East Jordan and Ellsworth. We have emailed the Athletic Director at each school. Feel free to contact the athletic di-

rector or coaches for spring sports at your school to be sure they are sending photos and details for spring sports athletes to the Charlevoix

County News for publication. They can email Dave Baragrey at Office@Charlevoix-CountyNews.com

AREA ATHLETE PROFILE



Varsity Boys Basketball
2017-18 2018-19 2019-20

JV Baseball
2016-17 2017-18

Varsity Baseball
2018-19

JV Baseball
2016-17

Offensive MVP Varsity Boys Basketball 2017-18

Most Improved Player 2019-20

Named to Charlevoix County News All-Area Basketball Dream Team

AJ Bartlett



EAST JORDAN RED DEVILS

Parents:
Adam Bartlett Mary Sue Uy

AREA ATHLETE PROFILE



Varsity Competitive Cheer
2016-17

JV Competitive Cheer
2018-19
2019-20

JV Softball
2016-17

Tennis
2017-18
2018-19

Tennis 2018-19
Excellent Doubles Player Award


Augie Legato



EAST JORDAN RED DEVILS

Parents:
Gary Legato
Chris and Kari Vrondran

AREA ATHLETE PROFILE




Senior Athlete

Baseball – Infielder/Catcher/Pitcher
Member of the 2017 and 2018 Northern Lakes Conference Championship Team, 2019 Northern Lake Conference Runner up Team; Northern Lakes All Conference 1st Team 2017, 2018, 2019; Dream Team 2018; Antrim County All Area 1st Team 2017-19

Stats (2017, 2018, 2019)
Games Played - 71, Batting Average - .397
Hits - 73 (65 singles, 8 doubles)
RBIs - 51, Walks - 28, Strike Outs - 29
Stolen Bases - 34, Runs scored - 66
Defensive - 215 innings - .818 fielding percentage
Pitching Stats - 3 wins 5 losses, ERA 1.575, games pitched 12, innings pitched 26.7; hits allowed 23, earned runs allowed 7, walks 20, strike outs 34

Jesse's understanding of the game of baseball was one of his greatest assets. He contributed defensively as shortstop, catcher, and when needed, pitcher. His greatest strength was his ability and consistency at the plate. He was a team leader in batting average, hits and RBIs.

Jesse Hersha



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as our defense because it's an effective and strong defense. I think that every team should work on smart base running, offensive signals, base coverage, and communication on what the team is doing on each play. These are all things that coach (Tom) Zipp works on us with and it's always some of the first things we cover at each practice.

(SANDISON): I think one skill that should be worked on at practice is endurance! It is so easy to fall apart in the second game of your doubleheader. I have noticed that our team struggles to come back strong in the second game, especially if we won the game before. It is very easy to lay back and take the second game easy, which is not good! Our team has started some conditioning and I think if we had a 2020 season we would be very strong in not only the first but also the second.

(GABOS): Basic fielding: quickness to the ball, transition from glove to hand. Hitting: how to harness your power.

(FITZPATRICK): One of the most important skills for softball I believe is understanding of the game and communication. A lot of times in softball you are dealt with situational scenarios and you have to be able to make quick decisions and know what the right move is. One way to help your teammates in these situations is by communicating to them but it's also important to have a general idea of top priorities when in these situations. My team works on these a lot and walks through them at practice. You will never be able to prepare for every scenario possible when you are in the field, this is why you need to have an understanding of the game in order to make split second decisions yourself.

(M. BEHLING): A top skill I think all teams need to work on is communication on the field. It's super easy to just get in a rhythm and start sleeping during a slower game but if you're constantly talking either about cheering on your teammates and pitcher or you're saying where the next play should go you're helping your team to stay successful. I think my team and every team should always work on this even if they already talk they would be talking more.

(J. BEHLING): I think our team can always improve on situational play. It isn't always easy to make quick decisions, as each play will have consequences that accompany it. Decisiveness comes with knowledge and reading the situations at hand. This area is one our



Ellie Skrocki, East Jordan Red Devils

whole team can always look to improve. We have worked on these situations in the past, and the learning generally comes from talking about situations during practice.

(SKROCKI): I think defense is what everyone should work on most, & we definitely do.

(KITSON): I think the most important thing to work on in practice is situational defense. Practicing game-like situations helps make certain decisions a habit. Also throwing and catching drills are important. One error can change the outcome of a game. We practice both things at our practices.

3. Up until this point, do you feel that each coach you have played for has taught you what you need to be the best player you can be on the field? What is your favorite skill learned?

(DORST): Through the years of playing softball, I've had so many amazing coaches that have taught me so many different skills and plays. And one thing I love about having multiple coaches is every one of them has something different to say or

teach, which has made me the player I am today. I know so many scenarios, plays, skills, and even knowing all of that, I'm still learning. I do feel like as of today, I am the best player I can be, but I can always get better and improve to make myself a better player everyday.

(LENTZ): Yes. Through all the time that I have played softball my coaches have all done a great job preparing me for game situations. I really enjoy hitting but one of my favorite things to do is turn double plays. I have only had a few in games but I really like working on them in practice.

(BRODIN): I definitely think that I have learned something essential from every coach that I have had. My favorite skill that I have learned is definitely a running throw when receiving a bunt.

(SANDISON): It's very common for an athlete to not get along or not agree with their coach. Sadly, I have had a coach that was very degrading and made me really lose my passion for softball. But, they have actually taught me the most valuable lesson in softball, to have fun. Win or Lose, games are so much more enjoyable if you can laugh it off and just be positive. This helps wins to occur more often and losses to be less disappointing.

(GABOS): Yes, I think every coach I have had has helped me in a different skill of the game - throwing, hitting and mental. Each coach has had a different look on the "most important" skill and I think that variation has helped me to become a well rounded player.

(FITZPATRICK): I am so grateful to have been able to be taught by so many knowledgeable coaches. I feel as though there's always room for improvement and almost every coach has different philosophies for the game but I am confident in the skills I have been taught up until now. My favorite skill I have been taught would probably be how to play first base.

(M. BEHLING): I have had many coaches between high school and travel softball and I think that all of my coaches have done nothing but help me. My favorite thing that I have learned is calling pitches when I'm catching. To me it's a very

(KITSON): Up to this point, I feel as though my coaches have taught me to be the best player I can be. My favorite skill to learn was slap-hitting. I have always been a bunter, so learning how to slap hit gave me another option to use, adding more skill to my game. I can at the plate choose to bunt, slap or hit which has helped me become a harder batter to judge.

4. (Situational) Bottom of the 6th, the count is 3-2, runner on third, 1 out, you trail by 1, The pitcher has been throwing nothing but strikes.....What do you do? (No wrong answer here), A) look for a pitch to drive; B) expand the strike zone and swing away; C) shorten swing and protect; D) lay down a bunt to surprise the defense; E) you fill in an optional answer.

(DORST): Even though bunting is one of my stronger skills, I would probably go with B. This is because the pitcher has been throwing strikes all night, so they will most likely throw a strike, but it could be anywhere in the strike zone. So I will have to expand the zone and swing away. If I bunted, one of us will most likely get out unless the defense is slow, so I would swing away.

(LENTZ): Look for a pitch to drive.

(BRODIN): I would definitely look for a pitch to drive, because a long fly ball or line drive would give the runner on third enough time to tag up and make it home.

(SANDISON): Shorten swing and protect.

(GABOS): Look for a pitch to drive.

(FITZPATRICK): In this situation with someone on third I would look for a pitch to drive, there is still only one out and we need an opportunity for the runner to score.

(M. BEHLING): I think that this decision should be based on who's at bat and what their strongest at. If you have a strong bunter then bunt. But if you have someone who's a consistent base hitter then have them hit.

(J. BEHLING): This situation really depends on who the

runner on third base is. The runners before me in the order all have a lot of speed and base-sense. I'm trusting them to have base-running sense. I would lay down a bunt aimed towards second base. I would leave the runner on third to decide whether or not it is safe enough to make it home. If the infielders play it safe not choosing to take anyone I would immediately round first and head to second, hoping to draw a diversion so the runner on third could make it home.

(SKROCKI): Shorten swing and protect

(KITSON): Given these circumstances I would likely swing at anything I think I could get my bat on hoping to either foul it off or hit it fair. I would not swing it at any obvious balls.

5. (Situational) Imagine you're the pitcher. (3rd inning, a lot of game left) Your team is up by 2, there are runners on 2nd and 3rd. The hitter that is now up to bat has been on a hot streak and has done some damage to your team over their career. How do you pitch them? Give me a 6 pitch sequence and what do you think will be the result? How does the inning end?

(DORST): First I would pitch an outside ball. Then a strike but top left so they swing under the ball. Then I would pitch two more balls so the count is 3-1. After that I would pitch a changeup to the bottom left so they swing ahead of the ball. Now the count is 3-2, so I decide to throw a strike, and she swings and hits it right in between center and right. The center fielder goes and catches it and quickly throws it in to get the runner on second out. The inning will end with the next batter by hitting a line drive to short stop and catching the ball.

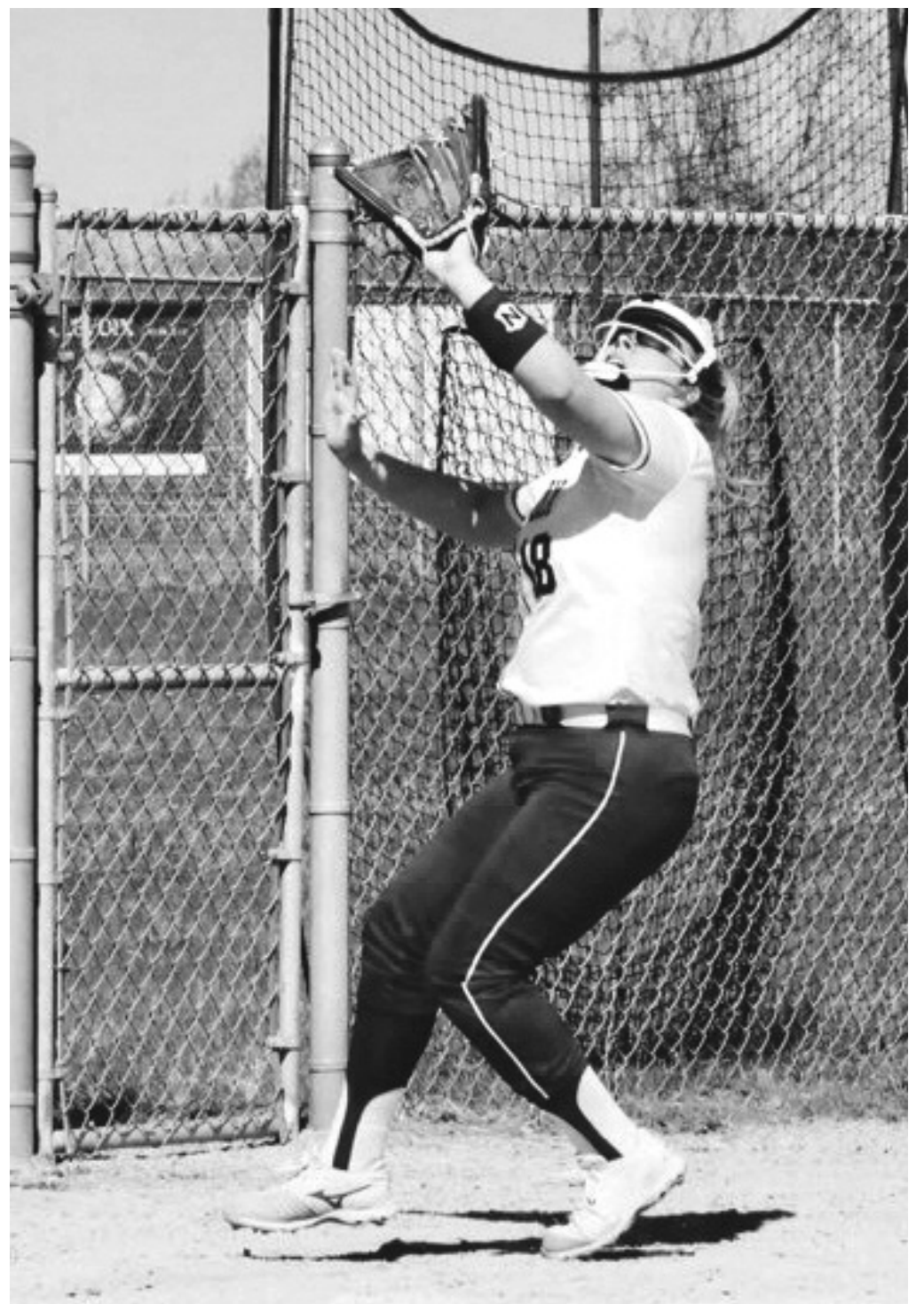
(LENTZ): I would pitch them carefully and try to get them to chase balls on the corners, and if I walk them it's okay.

(BRODIN): The first ball would be low and outside, fastball high and inside, change up outside, the second ball would also be low and outside, the third ball

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Molly Kitson, East Jordan Red Devils



Zoe Brodin, Charlevoix Rayders

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would be high and inside, the fourth ball would be a change up. They would either pop fly for the out if they go after bad pitch, or walk setting up double play. The inning would end with them scoring one run.

(SANDISON): I would throw a low inside pitch, then a drop or a low outside, and then a rise. From that point, I would have a good idea about what the hitter is looking to hit and pitch around that.

(GABOS): Changeup, outside off plate fastball, riseball, off plate ball, high fast ball.

(FITZPATRICK): If I was a pitcher up against a player who has been an offensive threat to our team I would be changing up my pitches for her at bat. I would throw her inside and outside (definitely not up the middle for her), I would also be changing my speed in order to make her adjust. I would hope to striker her out without walking her in order to end the inning with the opponents still on the bases.

(M. BEHLING): If the batter is right handed, I would pitch high and outside then low and outside, then maybe a rise ball, followed by a changeup, and then back to low and outside for the last two. If the batter was left handed then I would pitch high and outside, high and outside, rise ball, rise ball, changeup, high and outside.

(J. BEHLING): Depending on where this batter is in the order and who follows I would pitch her low outside to start, in the strike zone. My next pitch would be inside high, finally followed by a drop ball used as a fishing pitch. After that I would throw my riseball, followed by another low outside and then inside changeup. My aim in this sequence is to keep the pitches inconsistent, that way she is never seeing the same thing twice. I'm hoping the result ends in a strikeout. It would be hard to say. Some batters I know better than others and I know what pitches they don't like and what they do.

(SKROCKI): Change up, inside corner so they'll pull it, low, low, inside corner, inside corner.

(KITSON): I would likely treat the batter normal. I would not give her any pitches that are meatballs, I would work around the strike zone hoping to find her weak spot, and then attack that. If I see she hits some deep foul balls in the first couple pitches I would probably start to throw balls.. If she gets walked, there is a force at every base making it hopefully easy to get the next outs, but my first priority would be to



Brooklyn Fitzpatrick, Boyne City Ramblers

make her prove to me that she can hit my pitches by working her strike zone.

6. (Situational) Now you're the batter. Game tied 0-0, 5th inning. Bases empty, the pitcher has been dominating all day, you hit them hard in your last at-bat, but right at the defense. Describe your approach to the plate, what goes through your mind? Will you get on base? How do you get on base? Why are you confident enough to say you will get on.

(DORST): The first thing that goes to mind is don't strike out and get on base. Which gives me the idea to bunt right to 3rd since bunting is one of my strong skills. This will also put them off guard because they will think I will hit again. So I lay down the bunt right down the 3rd base line and make it on base. I'm confident to get on base because I'm very fast and will place the bunt right where I need it.

(LENTZ): Going up to bat I would have the mindset knowing that I need to get on base. Early in the count, with no strikes on me, I am looking for my pitch to hit, something I can drive to get into scoring position. Only after I get two strikes on me will I shorten my swing. I am confident that when I go up there I am going to put the ball in play and get on base.

(BRODIN): I would approach confidently (not timid) appear aggressive, move back and towards (the) plate (making the pitcher work harder), remember her pitching patterns, recognise her strong pitches and weak pitches and hit accordingly.

Moving around in the box will allow me to hit away from defense and they will be expecting the same hit as last time. I know I would produce a strong base hit to start the rally.

(SANDISON): As I approach the plate I remember to be confident in myself and do whatever my coach would like me to do. I would probably bunt down the first base line and hopefully beat the ball there.

(GABOS): Go up to the plate ready to swing, probably thinking about keeping my hands in quickening my swing, get on base from a hole shot hit to the outfield. I am confident enough to say I will get on because if I got hit off the pitcher in my last at - bat I am most likely timed up with her pretty well.

(FITZPATRICK): If i was the batter in this situation I would go up with confidence after my last at bat. Knowing I need to get on base for my teammates I would do my best to wait for a pitch I can drive and get a base hit.

(M. BEHLING): Softball is a very mental game so of course you need to constantly think I've got this and I will hit the ball and get on base. I think that if I have this mindset going into an at-bat then I am far more likely to get on base if my mindset was more of "oh crap" she's a super good pitcher. You're midget should be I'm a great hitter and I've been practicing for this now it's my time to hit.

(J. BEHLING): My approach each time I step up is that each at-bat is different from the last. I've seen the pitcher before and I know what she's throwing. Expect the same stuff as before. I could always bunt and use my speed if all else fails.

(SKROCKI): It's my job at that point to start the fire for my team. I would go up to the plate and make sure it's done. The game of softball is all mentality and I'm confident I could be strong enough in that moment to start it because all of the time I spent working on it wouldn't fail me in that moment.

(KITSON): Likely at this point I would bunt or slap. After hitting a hard ball last at bat, I would expect the defense to shift a bit allowing for more room to square around and drop a bunt.

7. What is the most memorable moment of your career so far and why? Can be little league, travel or High School.

(DORST): One of my most memorable moments of my career was our team winning our district game and becoming district champs for the first time in

Charlevoix little league history. It was such a huge game for us and we all played so well that we pulled out a huge win at the end.

(LENTZ): The most memorable moment of my softball career would be during the summer of 2018, before my freshman year, when my Little League team made it to the Juniors State Finals. None of us had ever made it to the state finals before, including the coaches, so we didn't know what to expect. But we went in with a winning attitude and worked our hardest. We went 6-3 in the tournament, including two wins on the final day before losing to St. Clair in the championship game. It was also a really fun experience because it was in Gladstone and we were all able to stay up there and had a great team bonding experience.

(BRODIN): My most memorable moment was when my high school team played against Kalkaska last year and I hit a home run. This was my favorite game because we split with a really good team and our team was dominating on offense the whole day.

(SANDISON): The most memorable game for me was the little league state championship game. When we went to the tournament, we had no idea what to expect. We were all so certain that we would be the first team to go home, but we ended up making it to the championship game. Although we lost that game, the tournament overall was so much fun and our team worked so incredibly hard and it all made us grow into very strong ball players.

(GABOS): My most memorable moment in my career was winning the district title my freshman year. It was

something that I had never experienced before and was just such a happy moment. The bus ride back with the baseball team, who had also won districts, was one of my favorite bus rides of my high school career.

(FITZPATRICK): The most memorable moment in my career so far would be winning the rockford tournament both times with my travel team. We played some good competition and the finals were close games that felt so good winning.

(M. BEHLING): My most memorable moment is with my travel team. We were in Traverse City at a tournament and we were camping at the state park. Most of our team camps together and we stay in tents together and we would always walk down the bike path and go get ice-cream and ride go karts.

(J. BEHLING): The most memorable part of my softball career was the second-to-last game of 2019's travel softball season. My team, Lady Lakers, was playing our familiar rival Petoskey Blaze. This game was very close and it was a strong effort from the two teams, both offensively and defensively. I always love playing Blaze because our team knows theirs and the rivalry is consistently strong. I would be lying if I said I'm never nervous before those games. This game stuck out significantly because I remember how energetic our travel team was that day. My travel team is easily my favorite team I have ever been a part of.

(SKROCKI): My favorite memory is hitting my first home run on the pitch after Molly Kitson hit her first one. It was so exciting and we always wondered who would hit one first.

(KITSON): The most memorable moment in my career was my first homerun. I hit the homerun with 2 strikes only for my best friend to hit her first home run the very next pitch. It was a memorable experience to have shared with my team and best friend.

8. Game is on the line. Your team is ahead by 1 and on defense, who do you fear the most as an opponent (individual) that is coming to the plate and why?

(DORST): I would say the fourth player in their lineup because that's usually always your strongest hitter. And if they have been hitting dingers all night I would think that they are going to drive it.

(LENTZ): There are a few people that come to mind, but Maggee Behling (Boyne City) is an all around great player and can get on base in a lot of situations. I have seen both sides of her, being on her team in travel, and playing against her in high school and she knows how to go up to the plate confidently and with a plan in her head to get on base.

(BRODIN): One athlete that I know is a strong force at the plate is Josee Behling (Boyne City) and she would be the person to fear not only because she had a big bat but because she is a very smart and fast base runner.

(SANDISON): If I were pitching I would fear Maggee Behling (Boyne City). She's an incredible softball player on defense and offense. She's aggressive at the plate and can do some serious damage.

(GABOS): No response.

(FITZPATRICK): If the game is on the line I would fear a power hitter the most on defense. Someone who is a good hitter and could do some damage in the field.

(M. BEHLING): I would be most fearful of Josee Behling (Boyne City). She's fast and has a very strong bat. She's smart about choosing pitches and knows which to swing at and which to lay off.

(J. BEHLING): Even though she is on my team I fear Katelyn Gabos. If Katelyn was my opponent I would pitch her outside or intentionally walk her every time. She has so much power and I've seen the consequences of being on the receiving end of a line drive shot of hers.

(SKROCKI): Josee Behling, because she has a solid bat left and right handed and is super fast. You couldn't predict what she was doing if you wanted to I wouldn't want her up in that situation. Or Katelyn Gabos. She's a powerhouse so depending on if anyone was on base I'd say one of those two.

(KITSON): Katelyn Gabos from Boyne city. Getting the chance to play travel ball with her I have seen her multiple times clutch a game. She has a strong swing and is a power hitter. I would hate to be in a situation where the game rests on her shoulders unless, of course, I was on her team... then hit away Kate!

9. Same thing, game is on the line. Your team is down by 1 in the home part of the last inning, who (you or a teammate) do you want to see at the plate and why?

(DORST): I would want my fourth player in the lineup to hit because she's a power hitter and has hit a couple dingers in her career. So since she's a power hitter. I would want her to drive it over the fence and get whoever is on base around the bases.

(LENTZ): Zoe Brodin because she has a lot of strong at bats and could get the ball out of the infield to at least



Grace Lentz, Charlevoix Rayders



Krista Dorst, Charlevoix Rayders

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get a base hit.

(BRODIN): I would either want myself or Grace Lentz at the plate because both of us are aggressive and the plate and we produce good at-bats when the pressure is on.

(SANDISON): I would want to see Zoe Brodin at the plate. I think she does really well under pressure and I have a lot of confidence that she can bring a run in.

(GABOS): I would love to be up to bat at that time. It is nerve wracking but exciting to be under pressure while knowing you have to help your team.

(FITZPATRICK): If the game is on the line I would want the best hitter to be up to bat. I feel confident with my skills but if I have teammates who are better hitters or have more power, then I would want one of them at the plate.

(M. BEHLING): Same as above (Josee Behling).

(J. BEHLING): I'd want to see either Katelyn (Gabos) or Maggee (Behling) at the plate for our team. Katelyn has a lot of power and comes up big in those situations, but Maggee is extremely consistent and handles herself well under pressure.

(SKROCKI): Molly Kitson or Haley Gibson. They both get on base and if we were down by one I know one of them would get on for someone after to move them around.

(KITSON): In travel ball I would like to send Josee Behling to the plate, she has wheels like no other and can likely keep us alive. In high school ball I would send Ellie Skrocki to the plate because she is great at putting the ball in play and finds the holes in the defense easily.

10. When did you start playing softball? And why have you stuck with it? (Did a particular coach make it fun? Was it the competition? Was it because your friends played?)

(DORST): I started playing softball when I was four and I've always loved it since day one. Everything about this sport is just so much fun and I enjoy every second being on that field. The idea of getting to hit a ball and run around the bases has always just sounded so fun to me. As I've gotten older I've stuck with it and wanted to get better, which is where I am today.

(LENTZ): I started playing softball when I was 9 years old. When I was younger I wasn't a super athletic person, and I wasn't crazy into softball. But I have made many good friendships, and stuck with it and it is now one of my favorite sports to play. I have been playing with the same group of girls for the past seven years which has helped us grow and bond together.

(BRODIN): As a kid I actually started out playing baseball, but then eventually switched to softball. I always liked the way the game was set up, but I definitely liked the competition aspect of it and the fact that you couldn't do it all by yourself.

(SANDISON): I started playing softball when I was about 8 or 9. I played little league for a few years and then I started my first year of travel on a 10u team and have played ever since. I've stuck with it because it was something I was very passionate about and it just clicked. I also had very supportive adults in my life that told me I have a gift and it made me want it even more.

(GABOS): I started playing softball in a more serious



Katelyn Gabos, Boyne City Ramblers

way when I was 10. I played travel ball for coach Tom Mielke. I think that he is a big reason why I became so motivated in the sport. When I was on his team I was the youngest and least experienced player. This team is where I learned that I needed to work hard if I wanted to be good, or better, than all the players around me. Coach Mielke really helped me do this by motivating me and teaching me the basic skills I needed.

(FITZPATRICK): My softball career started all the way back to the years of tee-ball. I started playing because of my dad but I kept playing because I loved it. I enjoy the competitive part of it and how the game is played. As I got older and played on several teams I enjoyed the aspect of meeting new people and the bonds I made with teammates.

(M. BEHLING): I remember being super young and my parents would stop if we were on the road going somewhere that was far away and get a foam bat and ball and we would go to a rest stop and play.

(J. BEHLING): I began my softball career when I was really young. I started learning simple things about the game at a young age. On road trips my dad always stopped at a store somewhere and got a foam bat and ball that he would front toss to my sister and I, who took turns. I've stuck with softball because I love every aspect of the game. I love the team comradery and the fun we have outside of the actual game. It's a sisterhood.

(SKROCKI): I played because it was the way my family bonded. I spent my childhood going to my sisters travel ball games and my dad and mom were baseball & softball coaches. The passion just moved through all of us, I'm super thankful for it.

(KITSON): I started playing softball the first year I could. For a while I only played because my mom made me, but as soon as I joined my travel team and started playing super competitive ball, I fell completely in love with the sport.

11. Who is the best dancer or singer on your team (can be your high school or travel team)? Who brings the music? Who is the team prankster? Who brings the best snacks?

(DORST): Avery (Zipp) is definitely the best dancer and singer, whenever there's music she's always dancing and making the team laugh. Grace (Lentz) always brings her big speaker so one of our players can play their playlist during practice and games. Katherine (Wagner) is definitely our team prankster, she's always making all of us laugh no matter what is happening. Zoe (Brodin) and Madelyn (Sandison) always bring really good snacks, but I would also say the parents usually bring us food also which is amazing.

(LENTZ): Our whole high school team and travel team love to dance and play music to bring energy in the game. But Kate (Klinger) is probably one of the most fun people to be around in the dugout because she jokes around a lot and makes everyone smile, but also knows when to be serious. In high school I normally bring the speaker for the music, and Zoe (Brodin) & Avery (Zipp) pick the songs, and the parents bring snacks and food to double headers and tournaments.

(BRODIN): Avery (Zipp) is definitely the teammate to hook the team up with the best playlist, dancing, and singing! Kate (Klinger) and Katherine (Wagner) both work together to pull the most pranks on the team! I will say that most people on the team (but mostly Avery Zipp) would say that I always pack the best game time snacks. I always make sure to stack up on seeds before a game because I know at least 3 people on the team will ask for my snacks!

(SANDISON): Kate Klinger always brings the energy to the team. She makes sure speakers are where they need to be and she gets the playlist all set for game day and practices. She gets everyone pumped up with her singing and dancing and before games, we always make sure to have a dance party to shake out all the nerves. And honestly, our parents are probably the ones that have all the snacks. They make sure we are full and energized for our games.

(GABOS): Josee (Behling) is the queen of the speaker. I would say Brooklyn (Fitzpatrick) has the best snacks because I always took her seeds.

(FITZPATRICK): Josee (Behling) always brings the speaker and usually the best snacks and Katelyn (Gabos) I would say is the best dancer.

(M. BEHLING): Elizabeth

Nichols (travel ball teammate) is the best dancer, Ellie Skroski is the best singer, Josee (Behling) brings the music, Elizabeth Nichols is the team prankster, I bring the best snacks.

(J. BEHLING): Elizabeth (Little Bit) Nichols, from travel softball, is by FAR the best dancer. I don't think we have a "best singer." I generally bring music. We all sort of pool our seeds and share them as a team, or my grandma Irene brings really good snacks.

(SKROCKI): Best dancer is "little bit" (Elizabeth Nichols from Mancelona) Josee Behling brings the music, I feel kinda like Maggee Behling is the prankster. Best snacks is grandma of course (Josee & Maggee's grandma).

(KITSON): The best dancer from the Lady Lakers (travel team) is definitely Elizabeth (lil bit) Nichols from Mancelona and Josee Behling from Boyne City. They are always dancing both on and off the field. Josee is the team DJ, and the team snack bringer is no other than the team grandma, who happens to be Josee's and Maggee's real grandma. No one will be leaving the field hungry if Irene is there.

12. Have you ever made a silly bet in a game or practice and lost? If you can describe, what was the bet and what did you have to do to pay up?

(DORST): I've never really made a bet before for softball, but our coach tells us if we hit a homerun that we get ice cream after the game.

(LENTZ): At the beginning of our High School season last year our coach told us that whenever one of us hits a homerun, that he would buy us pizza. So sometimes when one of our power hitters would step up to the plate and we really needed runs, or just at random times, we would start yelling pizza slogans like "no one out pizzas the hut" or the Little Caesars slogan "Pizza! Pizza!". It was just a funny little thing that we did throughout the year.

(BRODIN): During my freshman year our team would always jump in the lake (even when it was freezing) and whoever didn't always got made fun of!

(SANDISON): In practice, we would have a "home run" competition and we would always try to convince (our)

coach that if we can get 5 home runs then he has to buy us ice cream. I don't think we ever got ice cream or were ever "punished" for not getting 5 but it was a really good motivator and we were all super happy for each other when someone hit one over.

(GABOS): I definitely have made bets about how long practice would last, or how long it would take coach Clausen to get to rotary after school.

(FITZPATRICK): I do not think I have ever made a softball related bet.

(M. BEHLING): I have not made a bet during a game.

(J. BEHLING): I can't share this one!

(SKROCKI): I can't think of any. Besides if I hit a home-run I'd get money from my dad and every game the bet was on I'd bat SO good but not get a home run and he loved it.

(KITSON): I personally haven't made any bets, but my boyfriend bet my mom after we won the Cherry Capital showdown tournament in Traverse City that he could throw a softball over the fence from home plate. (250 foot field). He did it, with no warm up throws and in tennis shoes. My mom owed him \$10, and the fans, along with Facebook all loved it.

13. If you were given a day to spend with any college or professional softball player, who would it be? What would you two do?

(DORST): I would want to spend a day with Jennie Finch because of how much experience and skills she has. We would probably practice anything we can from hitting, throwing, etc. And I would also talk to her about her life and what she's gone through to get to where she is today. It would just be a packed day of whatever we can cover.

(LENTZ): I would probably want to spend the day with Sydney Romero and I would ask her questions about hitting and about the drills and training that she does to become the player she is today.

(BRODIN): I would definitely choose Sis Bates, because I've always loved the way she plays the game and never gives up on a play. We would definitely be working on some of her best tips and tricks on defense!

(SANDISON): I would want to spend the day with Montana Fouts. And I would want to just talk to her and hear her story because she has accomplished so much.

(GABOS): Amanda Chidester - I would love to have batting practice with her.

(FITZPATRICK): If I could choose any college softball player to spend the day with I would choose Haley Cruse, center fielder for the University of Oregon.

(M. BEHLING): I would want to spend my day with Amanda Lorenz and I would want to go to the Florida Gators Stadium and get a tour of their whole facility.

(J. BEHLING): I would spend my day with Kelly Christner. She was the center fielder for U of M her senior year. That year Michigan made it to the finals in the Women's College World Series. I'd love to learn more about the mentality she had during the game and different tips she could share.

(SKROCKI): Jenny Finch. I'd ask her more serious questions on the level of the difference women and men have in sports in the public eye and hear her view on it.

(KITSON): Getting to talk to Sierra Romero, a former Michigan All-American! I got a picture and autograph from her when she was a senior

and have loved watching her play. She is easily one of my favorite softball players, and can HIT THE BALL!

14. What do you miss the most about not being able to be on the field right now?

(DORST): I just miss playing and practicing with my team everyday. This year I am a senior so this would have been my last season playing in high school. I just wish I would have had my last season, my senior night, and enjoyed every last moment with my team and of the season. I'm lucky I've had so many years of softball I can remember, but I do wish I could have ended my career playing my senior season.

(LENTZ): I was very excited for this high school season because we had a very similar team to last year and we were quite successful for being so young. We were working towards setting team goals and individual goals, and one of the biggest things we were looking forward to as a team was working towards winning the conference also getting past the district finals. I really miss the daily schedule and order that we would have if we were playing, and all of the practices, games, and tournaments in general.

(BRODIN): I am definitely sad about not being able to play my junior year of high school softball, but what I miss the most is just being on the field with my best friends and playing the game we all love together. I also miss all of the friendships that I've made with girls from other teams and playing against them.

(SANDISON): I miss being busy. The spring has always been a crazy busy time for me and now that I have nothing to do, it's really making me realize that the crazy softball schedule I had made me sane.

(GABOS): I definitely miss the thrill of the game and the feeling of success after doing something good. I really miss being able to bond with my teammates and see them everyday.

(FITZPATRICK): I miss the competition of the game the most and not being able to compete with some of my closest friends for my last year. I have so much fun playing softball and I was really looking forward to this year and being able to play with my team but also make some crazy memories with them as well.

(M. BEHLING): I miss my team. I've made so many friendships throughout my softball career and I just miss playing with them all. Hopefully we will still be able to play some travel ball!

(J. BEHLING): I miss my team the most. I was extremely excited to see what my senior year would bring and everything our team would accomplish. I will miss playing travel softball with my team from last year here the most. We are all very close outside of softball, even though we come from a spread of towns.

(SKROCKI): I miss the competition. The excitement. The adrenaline from the first game and experiencing the goodbye. Most of all I miss my team.

(KITSON): Right now I miss spending time with my teammates while playing the sport we all love the most. We had a team full of seniors this year who sadly had to miss out on their senior season. About three quarters of our team have played travel ball, so we have seen a much different level of competition. I believe our team had a chance at a regional championship title. Sitting out on my senior year was something I never saw coming, but it is a good lesson to give your all in every game, meet or practice, because you never know when your last will be. Treat every moment as if it is your last.

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spirit will always guide us to God's Word for our answers. We can be a doer of what He has said works. Be anxious for nothing. Don't allow yourself to worry and think what if thoughts. But with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your request known to God. Then God's peace which passes all understanding will rule and reign in your heart and mind by Christ Jesus. The best way is always God's way of handling these heartwrenching changing times we are in. Check out Philippians 4 for God's checklist for thinking. Marge Spohn, Petoskey

Positive Notes of Encouragement are free in the Weekly Choice. Birthdays, Anniversaries, Weddings, Congratulations or just a Positive Note all are free. E-Mail your Note of Encouragement to Office@WeeklyChoice.com

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NORWOOD TOWNSHIP TRUTH IN BUDGETING PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
The Norwood Township Board will hold a Truth in Budgeting Public Hearing on Monday, June 15, 2020 at 7:00pm at the Norwood Township Hall, 19759 Lake St, Village of Norwood,

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING MARION TOWNSHIP, CHARLEVOIX COUNTY
The Marion Township Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing on Thursday, June 18, 2020 at 7:00 PM at the Marion Township Hall located at 3737 Marion Center Road, Charlevoix, Michigan for the purpose of receiving public comment pertaining to a request by Tracey and Tabatha Simpson at 15644 Phelps Road for a 53 foot front yard variance for a proposed 55' x 120' hoop barn for hay storage.

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