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Power Hitter at Buckeye Field has Big Dreams

By Mikaela Cowles





Lafayette Little League's Alexie Shurtz at the plate Photo Sheryl Cardiff

As Cubs player #14 approaches the plate at Lafayette Little League's Buckeye Field, it's as if the opposing team recognizes the jersey number of arguably the most famous Chicago Cubs player – big hitter Ernie Banks. The outfielders move deep. Really deep.

"She has incredible power," says Bob Brueckner, the manager of this season's Yankees, another Little League Majors' team. "She can be fooled on a pitch and still one-hand it out of the park."

Yes – she. Meet 7th-grader Alexie Shurtz, one of those players everyone loves to watch this season, and not because she's the only girl wearing a Lafayette Little League Majors uniform, although she is. It's because Alexie has that kind of breakout 12-year-old strength that makes watching Little League Majors ball exciting – a home run All-Star hitter who's also a formidable force on the pitching mound. The one-two skill punch that makes it easy to imagine Alexie achieving the collegiate athletic dream – Division I ball. Only it's not a baseball dream.

"UCLA's my dream school," says Alexie, who hopes to play collegiate softball.

Alexie has been playing Little League since T-ball, when she first stepped up to the plate at age 6. It's still fun, she says.

"There's striking a guy out, and then there's getting a hit off a guy. I don't know which one is better," says Alexie.

Still, Alexie plans to transition to softball. The question is, when?

Brueckner, a former Acalanes softball coach and father of collegiate softball player Alyssa Brueckner, has taken a strong interest in Alexie's playing, and says she has the potential to be one of the "top five" softball players in Lamorinda.

Says Brueckner: "Softball is a quicker game... it's more about strategy. In softball one little mistake and the person is safe at first, instead of out."

With Alexie's potential to excel as a softball player, Brueckner has encouraged her to make the move soon.

This season, though, look for Alexie at Lafayette's Buckeye Field. She'll probably be rounding third base, smiling as she runs towards the rest of her team who gather at home plate, waiting to congratulate her for yet another homerun.



Shurtz rounds third, heading towards home Photo Sheryl Cardiff
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