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Bluegrass Baseball: A Year in the Minor League Life

Campo Grad in Orinda for Book Discussion and Signing Oct. 13

By Jennifer Wake



Author and Campolindo alum Katya Cengel Photos provided

Campolindo High School alum, journalist and author Katya Cengel hasn't always been a baseball fan. But when her editor at the Courier-Journal in Kentucky assigned her a series on Louisville's minor league baseball team, the Bats, she was hooked.

In her book, *Bluegrass Baseball: A Year in the Minor League Life* (University of Nebraska Press, 2012), Cengel profiles four Kentucky minor league teams and tells the story following two players from each team through a season. The author spent evenings and weekends meeting up with the different teams and tagging along to road games or following players into their homes.

Each had unique qualities, she says.

"The Lexington Legends had a very colorful president at the time who pulled crazy stunts like eating cat food and camping out in the stands when the team lost," she says. "It also had Jose Altuve who was an all-star with the Houston Astros this season. Louisville had a Cuban transplant throwing a 100-plus-mile fastball and a bunch of other guys on the cusp of the big time or at the tail ends of their careers."

Before reporting on minor league baseball, Cengel

didn't realize how difficult the life is for minor league players.

"Most players get a day off a month if that," she says. "For the players every day was the same, the only difference was whether they were playing at home or taking a bus on the road. They knew what time they had to be at the field or the bus but seldom remembered whether it was a Monday or a Saturday because it didn't make much difference to them. I was fascinated by their transitory existence."

About all they have time for besides playing during the season is sleeping and eating, she adds. And yet every day they must perform at some of the highest levels of athletics.

"Their chances of making it to the Big Leagues are slim and even if they make it they probably won't stay," she says. "I never realized that just because you make the Bigs doesn't mean you are set. You could be back down in the minors the next day."

The lesson she learned from the players, however, applies to aspiring athletes as well as to writers young and old: "to follow your dreams as far as they will take you."

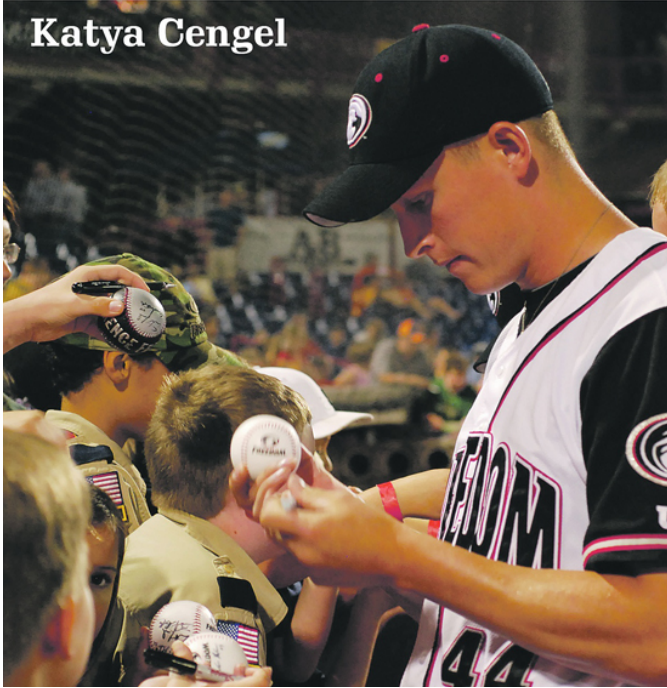
Cengel will discuss and sign copies of her book at noon Saturday, October 13 at Orinda Books. For information, visit

www.orindabooks.com.

Bluegrass Baseball

A Year in the Minor League Life

Katya Cengel



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