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## Kaylee Pond: An athlete for all seasons

By Jon Kingdon



Photos Gint Federas

For many athletes these days, it's all in for one sport. After one season is completed, they just move on to a club team for the same sport. Kaylee Pond, a rising senior at Acalanes High School proved to be the exception to the rule with a year to be remembered. She was named MVP for the Diablo Athlete League in both softball and basketball, listed as the 13th best athlete among boys and girls in the Metro Area by the San Francisco Chronicle along with being named the 26th best athlete in Northern California among both boys and girls.

Having begun playing organized sports at the age of 4, Pond attributes her love for sports from her parents: "My Mom (Kari) was athletic and played sports and my Dad (Wyllie) played basketball in college. They were my coaches growing up. Sports are our thing."

When Pond came to Acalanes as a sophomore, her athletic career was set back when she tore her ACL playing basketball and missed the rest of the basketball season and the entire softball season. Still, Pond found a way to stay involved: "I was so used to working out and practicing every day and all I could do then was leg lifts and lunges. Vic (head softball coach Victor Silva) allowed me to help coach and be a part of the team and Saki (head basketball coach Michelle Sasaki) would ask my input at halftime. I even got to coach a fourth-grade AAU team. Dr. William Workman and his staff were so patient with me and the rehab really went quickly."

Fortunately for Pond, at this point, she does not have to pick a favorite sport: "I love both even though they're two different sports. They're like yin and yang. Basketball is fast paced, competitive, physical and energetic. I love the ability to control what is happening on the court. It's the one-on-one nature in softball I love where the pitcher challenges you with every pitch."

Pond met the challenge this past year having batted .680 with seven home runs, 32 RBIs, 25 stolen bases and scored 47 runs. Silva knew from the start how special Pond would be: "We were 9-14 the season Kaylee was hurt and this year we were 18-6. She is very athletic and will do whatever she can to win. She has great anticipation and awareness. She's not a yeller, but leads by example. I think she could just sit on the bench and coach the team. I just wish I had two of her."

Sasaki shared a very similar appreciation for what Pond brought to the court: "What makes Kaylee so extraordinary is her passion to compete and that's her edge over her opponents. She really knows and understands the sport. Her intensity is the same every day. That is a very strong trait for a leader."

Pond may see some of herself in Sasaki: "I'm so blessed to have her as a coach. She is very competitive. She takes up the role of every coach. I just have so much respect for her. Her IQ on the game and how she has taught me and the team so many new things has made a difference with the program."

It's Silva's concern for the team that Pond appreciates most about him: "Vic is so dedicated not only in making us better softball players, but future women. He'll sacrifice anything for his players and focuses on building on the relationships between the players and coaches. He's always looking out for his players."

Pond verbally committed to play softball at Iowa State University her sophomore year though she cannot officially sign with the Cyclones until her senior year: "I have family in the Midwest and I fell in love with the vibe of the team. They're very team oriented which you don't see much anymore. A lot of college coaches would have told me not to play basketball again but they understood that I'm very passionate about basketball. I did not want to cut my basketball career short. We have a very good team and I believe we can go deep into the playoffs and I want to be a part of that."

Pond's parents have been role models for her and her brother Ibis, a rising sophomore at Acalanes, and she has two athletes that she has looked to for inspiration - one from afar and one locally: "In basketball, I really like Kawaii Leonard with how humble and competitive he is in every play, which I respect a lot. In softball, when I was a freshman at Alhambra, I was able to play alongside Briana Perez, who is such an amazing athlete and plays at UCLA now."

What does Pond do when she wants to get away from school sports? How about bowling and miniature golf: "If I need a break from sports, I just go to another sport. I have minimal free time and I like to keep myself busy."

Despite the prior injury, Pond is not looking back: "I'm only this young once where my body can do this for so long and if I want to play both sports, I'll play both sports. I'm very lucky to be able to do this."



Photos Gint Federas

Reach the reporter at: [sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com)

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