

Softball and engineering for Haley Stripling next year at Rutgers



Haley Stripling

Photo Rutgers athletics

By Jon Kingdon

When Haley Stripling was a freshman, she joined an Acalanes team that was led by Morgan Salmon and Kaylee Pond, both of whom would go on to play Division I softball, Salmon at the University of Santa Clara and Pond at Iowa State and the University of California. Stripling will be following in their footsteps next year by attending and playing softball at Rutgers University.

"Haley belongs on the same level as Morgan and Kaylee," Acalanes head coach Victor Silva said. "From her freshman year, she got stronger, doing a lot of weight work, and really built herself up. Every single game, I appreciated her more and more. For the last two years, she has

been the best player on our team."

Stripling comes by her athletic ability honestly. "My dad, (Shaharom) was a swimmer at UC Santa Barbara and my mother, (Alison) played a number of sports when she went to College Park High School," Stripling said. "My older sister, Mia, swam but hurt her shoulder and that's why I did not get into competitive swimming."

It was in her second year of playing in the Houseball League in Pleasant Hill at the age of 8 when softball began to be the primary sport for Stripling. "After my grandmother signed me up for softball, I fell in love with it," Stripling said. "I began to be noticed by the other players and their parents. My mother

and grandmother both really helped me to improve."

There have been a number of coaches that have been instrumental in Stripling's development. "I'm a natural righty but when I started playing travel ball, my coach, Mike Saulstitch, saw my speed and wanted to put me on the left side," Stripling said. "He taught me how to slap and hit every type of bunt. I'm very thankful that he put me on the left side because otherwise I wouldn't be the player that I am today with all the skills and the threat that I am from that side. He also taught our team that it was more than just a game and that he really cared about us as individuals."

Had she not suffered an injury, Stripling would have played for Ernie and Lindsey Munoz on the Lady Magic team over the summer. "I still take hitting lessons with Ernie at his facility every two weeks, and they have been crucial for me because without those lessons, I can see the difference in my confidence and my performance. Ernie is one of the best hitting coaches out here and I'm thankful that I could work with him."

It all then led to playing for Acalanes and Victor Silva. "You can't play for Victor and not have fun," Stripling said. "He can be very witty and funny, and it was never a dull moment with him. He's a very

good coach that knows a lot about the game and really cared for us and about what we wanted and how we wanted to improve."

For Silva, Stripling's intangibles were as valuable as her physical talents. "This year was my favorite team because I did not have to do much," Silva said. "If Haley thought the players needed to be jumped on, she would jump on them. If she felt they needed encouragement, she would encourage them. It was like having another coach out there for me. She set a great example for the underclassmen and hopefully they have learned from her example. She was the perfect role model on and off the field. She is one of the few that made time for the younger players. If an underclassman had a tough day or had problems figuring something out, Haley would go over and talk with her and work things out, which was an example of how she made things easier for me."

In choosing to attend Rutgers University, Stripling knows what she is getting into, weather wise. "I've always lived in California and will have to adjust to living with four seasons. In my first visit to Rutgers, it was 16 degrees, and I bought the clothing that I would need for the winter. The weather will be just fine and won't bother me as much as I thought it would."

Rutgers will be more than softball for Stripling, already choosing to major in Biomedical Engineering. Besides being named the Acalanes Female Athlete of the Year, Stripling also earned a scholar-athlete award all four years. "My dad is an engineer, so I got some wisdom from him from his experience as an athlete and an engineering student," Stripling said. "I took an engineering class at Acalanes, and it was a lot of fun. I've always loved creating things, problem solving and doing puzzles. Engineering is a good balance between creating things and problem solving and I can use my creativity and logic to solve my way out of things."

Haley was as impressed with Rutgers head coach Kristen Butler as she was with the university. "It was just finding the right school for me, and my parents really supported me in my decision. I knew that (Rutgers Head) Coach Kristen Butler was a good coach because I would just talk non-stop with her, and I could tell that they really cared about me equally as a person and as a player and how I play the game. I want to be available for whatever Coach Butler wants me to do because coming in as a freshman, it's going to be hard to get playing time but whatever the team will need from me, I will do the best that I can with whatever is asked of me."

Campolindo loses championship game 2-1 to Cardinal Newman

Underdog Cougars suffer late inning loss to top-ranked opponent



Photo Jon Kingdon

Graham Schlicht pitching against Cardinal Newman

By Jon Kingdon

When Campolindo defeated

Redwood Christian High School in the semifinal game of the North Coast Section Baseball Championship, there were

not a lot of people outside of Lamorinda that gave the Cougars, ranked 116th in the state much hope in the championship game against Cardinal Newman (25-1), ranked 6th in the state and 22nd nationally.

The Cougars (18-8-1) approached the game as they had done all season, winning their prior eight games. It was the philosophy that head coach Julian Fiammengo brought to Campolindo that enabled the team to go toe to toe with a team like Cardinal Newman and come within two outs of winning the championship: "It was the little details and the focus intensity that were needed if we wanted to compete on a daily basis. We got our players to 'engage with every pitch,' taking things slow, keeping the game slow and worrying about each pitch as it came in. It had been one pitch at a time, one inning at a time and one game at a time."

With freshman Graham Schlicht on the mound for Campolindo and Landon Rota for Cardinal Newman, it was a scoreless game going into the sixth inning. At the top of the inning, Hideki Prather was hit by a pitch and then was forced out at second on a ground out by Greg Palamountain. Miles Clayton then hit a double to drive in Palamountain putting Campolindo ahead 1-0 but was thrown out trying to stretch his hit into a triple.

The lead held up until the bottom of the seventh. Sam Valenti started the inning for Cardinal Newman with a single. After an out and then a double by Justice Brinson, there were men on second and third and Schlicht was relieved by Hudson Pergamit. An infield single tied the game and a bunt down the first base line drove in the winning run, for a heartbreaking 2-1 loss for the Cougars.

Schlicht's performance

was a great capstone to a dominating year. "It's really insane that a freshman can be mentally ready and dominate against a team that had only lost one game this year," pitching coach Gavin Shipp said. "After walking a couple of men early in the game, Graham just locked in, and it was all strikes from there on out and it was impressive to see him bounce back. It was a tough way to lose but Graham did an excellent job."

It was not an easy loss for Fiammengo to accept. "We competed and gave ourselves a chance to win and we shouldn't have anything to hang our heads about," Fiammengo said. "We were right there and couldn't get it done and that's how the game and life go sometimes. We were three outs away and we couldn't get it done. You know the toughest three outs to get are the last three outs and that was shown today."

Orinda Intermediate breaks 52-year track drought



Submitted by Peter Lindberg

The Orinda Intermediate Bulldogs won sixth-grade girls, seventh-grade boys, and

eighth-grade girls championships to help win the coveted Overall Middle School Track & Field Championship. The last time OIS won, it was 1970 and the school was known as Inland Valley.

There were many outstanding performances with Rowan Keenan, Tom Riley, Jordan Matthews, Zach Denniston, Rorey Freer, Grace Stott and Brendon Collins all top-point scorers helping OIS win



Photos provided

its first Overall Track Championship in 52 years.

Special thanks are due to the now legendary OIS coach Jason Curry. With more than 80 events in a single meet, Curry's attention to detail,

preparation, patience, and inspirational leadership helped the more than 100 participants compete at the highest level.

Success at State Tournament for Dons and Cougars, led by Acalanes 4x100 relay team

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She finished in 12th in the 100 meter and 19th in the 200-meter race. "Mari held her own in those races, but the state of California is just so

deep in the sprints you really have to be one of the best sprinters in the country in the flat stuff just to make the finals," Lindquist said.

As a freshman, Testa took 20 seconds to run the 100-

meter hurdles and fell in love with the event. "As she got her technique down and built year after year of training, this is the end result," Lindquist said. "For Mari to show so much improvement over a course of

a career, it's pretty awesome to see and it will be interesting to see how she progresses over the next couple of years at University of California."

Josh Myers ran a 10.74 in the 100-meter race finishing in

19th place. "For Josh to make it all the way to the state championship was a great accomplishment," Lindquist said. "He improved by over 0.3 of a second from the start of the year to the finish."