

Staub's shining pitching career ends at Mooney

By Richard A. Kiley

Cardinal Mooney girls' softball coach Joette Abbey was in a bind.

After losing one of her starting pitchers to an injury midway through the '83 season, she needed someone to step in while the hurler healed.

With no one on her varsity squad to fill the void, she called up a junior-varsity freshman who had acquired some pitching experience on the grammar-school level.

The freshman's name was Julie Staub, and the rest is history.

Staub stepped right in and was instrumental in leading the Cardinals to the Section 5 Class AA finals that year, only to lose 2-1 to Greece Olympia.

Staub's record for the second half of '83 was 6-1, and she led Mooney to the tournament final. It was a sign of things to come.

She compiled a 52-13 record in her three-and-a-half year career at Mooney, leading Abbey's squad to the final game in three out of four years. The only time during Staub's career that the Cardinals were spectators at the final game was in '84, when Mooney lost an extra-inning contest in a tourney semi-final game.

All these accomplishments came from a girl who originally hoped to participate in Mooney softball as a shortstop or left fielder.

"As a freshman, I really didn't want to pitch, but Mrs. Abbey found out I pitched in grammar school, so she picked me out," Staub said. "The decision was kind of made for me ... I'm not sorry with it, though."

Neither is Abbey.

"I think Julie is a unique athlete. Her determination and dedication go way beyond any other player I've ever coached," said Abbey, who also coached Staub's older sister, Shelly. "She (Julie) was a gift ... Not too many freshman would be able to do what she did."

That is quite a statement from a coach who has watched athletes going through the doors at Cardinal Mooney for 12 years.

"Her concentration is unbelievable. She's an athlete who is never satisfied with how well she's played," Abbey said. "She always wants to do better."

Staub's quest for continual improvement has not only earned respect from her mentor, but also from area officials in charge of post-season awards.

This year and in 1984, those officials named Staub Greece Athlete of the Year, an honor given to outstanding student athletes



Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

Julie Staub delivers one of her patented pitches, which enabled her to compile a 52-13 record at Mooney, and lead her team to the finals of the tournament three times.

from the four Greece high schools.

In addition to being tabbed Most Valuable Player of the Private-Parochial League every year since 1984, Staub was also named to the Section 5 Class AA All-Tournament team the past two seasons. This season, she was also inducted into the Rochester-Monroe County High School Athlete Hall of Fame.

But Staub has not limited her efforts to the softball diamond. During her freshman and sophomore years she also demonstrated her athletic prowess in basketball, volleyball and soccer. For the last few seasons, however, Staub has been restricted to volleyball and softball as a result of a knee injury that occurred during a 1984 soccer scrimmage against Spencerport.

"Mrs. Abbey hasn't had me hit the last two years because of my knee injury, and it has let me concentrate more on pitching."

Staub also attributes her success to another factor — good, old-fashioned hard work.

"I work at it (pitching) a lot. I play a lot of

other sports, so I stay in shape," Staub said. "And whenever she (Abbey) canceled practice, I would go home and practice. It wasn't really necessary for me to have the whole team around."

On the field, however, Staub was nothing but a team player, according to Abbey.

"She's very unselfish. She's not out for glory," Abbey said. "She wants her teammates to shine as well."

Mooney softball and Staub have shared many unforgettable games since her arrival at the school, but the three sectional finals are foremost in Staub's memory.

"I remember the Olympia game (in '83) real well. I wasn't really sure of the score most of the game though," said Staub, who will study medical technology at SUNY College at Fredonia in the fall. "It was disappointing to lose; sure, I wanted to win Section 5, but I was more disappointed for the seniors. They would never win one of those (Section 5 champion) patches. At the

time, the loss didn't matter as much to me as it did to them."

Nor will Staub soon forget the two championship games against Hilton (1986 Section 5 Class AA champ), especially this year's thriller.

"This year's game with Hilton was the best. Both teams played the best game they possibly could. It was just a matter of whose defense held up the longest," Staub said.

Although Staub admits that Cadet Bridgette Newman's faster windmill pitch must make the Hilton hurler more intimidating to opposing batters than she herself is, Staub thinks her success says something about the importance of control in pitching.

"In my first two years, my main concern was speed, but I've concentrated on control the last two," Staub said. "It's just as important to put the ball where batters can't hit it, where they won't be able to hit it. I look at the batter's feet now, and if they're crowding the plate, I'd pitch inside."

Abbey, who has also coached Staub in volleyball, agrees wholeheartedly.

"She's just kept getting better since her freshman year. She could work the ball this year, read the batters and knew when to throw the change-up, the fastball, and she was able to do it."

Abbey knows a player of Staub's caliber doesn't come around too often.

"We are at a disadvantage in the parochial system because we don't have any contact with kids before they get here, whereas the public schools can work with kids in the seventh and eighth grades," Abbey said. "It (junior high play) is almost like a minor league system for them. We were very lucky to have Julie."

Abbey now has the unenviable task of replacing Staub next year.

"She's going to be a tough player to replace; both her fielding and pitching will be tough to replace," Abbey said. "You can only hope."

One thing is for sure: Abbey got all she could hope for out of Julie Staub.

Cardinal Mooney instituting ice hockey this winter

By Richard A. Kiley

It has taken awhile, but the icemen finally cometh to Cardinal Mooney High School.

Don Singer, a 32-year-old hockey enthusiast with a rich background on both the high school and amateur levels, has been named head coach of the first hockey team in Mooney's 25-year history.

Before moving to Rochester a year ago, Singer coached at Central Dauphin High School in Harrisburg, Pa., leading the regional high school's Midget hockey team to an impressive second-place finish in the Atlantic District Regionals in 1982-83.

The following years, he coached his Junior C team to a first-place finish in the Keystone Hockey League, which is comprised of eight teams from the Central Pennsylvania area.

An amateur hockey official for 10 years, Singer has proven that he can take a less-than-mediocre program and make it a winner.

And he realizes that building the hockey program at Mooney will be no small task either.

"First I have to work with the kids and get a feel for their enthusiasm, sportsmanship and athletic ability," said Singer, who also belongs to the Western New York Lacrosse Officials' Association. "We'll have to go through some rigorous physical training; hockey takes a lot more than just skating and hitting the puck."

Having already met with about 15 potential players, Singer is enthusiastic, but also realistic about the team's first year.

"It's going to be an exciting year. We can only improve with every practice and every game," said Singer, whose team will compete in the Monroe County League. "The league is very competitive record-wise, but any team on any given day can beat any other team."

Because the program is just starting out, Singer feels no pressure about fielding a winner right away. "We're not looking to win any certain number of games or finish anywhere in the standings; we want to be competitive and respected," Singer said. "I've heard a lot of good things about Cardinal Mooney. If its sportsmanship and

athletic prowess is as good as its academic prowess, we should have a good year."

The addition of ice hockey to the school's sports program is the culmination of a diligent effort by Mooney's Ed Nietopski.

Nietopski, who just completed his 23rd year as the school's athletic director, saw the need for the program—not only for the students, but to keep up with rival Catholic school sports programs as well.

"We're the only Catholic school without a hockey team, and it's important to keep up the competition with our brother and sister schools," Nietopski said.

Nietopski said that the addition of the hockey program will make the school's athletic program even more attractive to students who are deciding on which high school to attend.

"In the past, boys at the school who've had hockey talent had to go somewhere else to play," Nietopski said. "My position here has always been to get activities that are attractive for the kids. There is a need for it (a hockey team) here."

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