

Your Softball Playing Career is Over—What Next?

What are some ways that you are still involved in the sport of softball?

For me personally, I am still around the sport a lot because I am an ESPN commentator. I also do coaching clinics and player clinics. I actually have my holiday camp coming up December 28th, 29th and 30th. I try to give back in different areas of the game—a lot of it at this point is educational.

Why is it important for you to give back and educate people that are still in the sport?

Well when I look back over my career there were distinct coaches that helped me out. One coach that has really made a difference in my life is Betty Zwingraf. She was my first pitching coach up in New Jersey. She spent a lot of time with me and really helped me become not only the athlete I am today, but also the person I am today. She taught me a lot and I feel like it's important for me to do the same thing for other young athletes. I think it is imperative for young women to have role models to look up to, learn from, and help them out. I think the other thing too is for the growth of our sport we all have a responsibility in helping the next generation.

What do you personally get out of staying involved with softball?

For me personally, I think a lot of it is just the joy of seeing a young athlete with a big smile on their face after I teach them something, like a drop ball or change-up.

I also get a lot of gratification out of working with parents who otherwise wouldn't have the confidence to go out and teach their kids to be better on the field. By teaching parents the fundamentals of softball and different skills and techniques, it gives them the confidence to teach their daughter themselves. That quality time together is important because I remember how much it meant to be when my dad would play catch with me

after work or when my mom was one of my first coaches. Those memories are wonderful aspects of my childhood that still put a smile on my face to this day.

Why do you think it's important for young athletes in softball to have someone involved that used to play professionally?

I think it's about respect. Anytime someone reaches the pentacle of their career, no matter what the field (business, sports, arts, music, etc.)—People strive to also accomplish those things. I think that for myself, as well as other Olympians and professional softball players, we serve as a role model. It's the dream of what the possibility is for all of these young athletes when they work hard.

What are some ways to get involved in softball for people other than yourself?

There are a lot of different ways to get involved. There are coaching opportunities for retired athletes. There are training opportunities. Nowadays within the game, for ESPN, there are also a lot of different opportunities. The sports field has really opened up for women over the last 20 years. There are a lot of jobs, not just coaching, not just on the field, but there are a lot of jobs off the field that pertain to women's sports.

For those athletes who used to play the sport, but not professionally, how would they go about getting involved in coaching or in a clinic?

The first thing to do is to volunteer. Figure out what you want to do, where you want to be, and make an effort to volunteer your time. Usually, those sorts of opportunities will present themselves once you get out there and get involved or become active in a program. Once you are giving, you will also be receiving. I think the big thing is to figure out what you want to do, at what level, and then get out there and be a part of it. I always tell people that life is about involvement and the more involved you are then the more you are in the thick of things. By being involved, you get the opportunity to have things affect your life that you would otherwise be missing out on. A lot of people miss out on a lot of parts of life because they are just simply not involved.