

**We aren't trying to
change the world; we are
just trying to be apart of
a game we love**



I'm a 17-year-old female baseball player who has been playing since I was four. And this book will be about my journey, my struggles, my opinions, other people's stories, when you are younger coaches and parents think little girls playing baseball at the ages 4-8 is awesome. Then we fast forward to ages 12- now and they think, these boys are getting bigger and stronger and well you aren't so maybe you should go play softball now. And you look at them and think if I wanted to play softball I would have. But instead of saying that you just walk away because well

you're just 12

Chapter 1

About Me

When I began to play baseball, I instantly fell in love with the game. But what I didn't know was what came with playing a male dominated sport. And what came with it was, nasty comments, lots of stares, and a lot of doubt. As I started to get older around 12 or 13 coaches were ruder, had more things to say about me playing, and tried everything they could to make me leave the team or see what I could handle. From 14-now (17 years old) it became stressful, felt like I wanted to quit, never got opportunities, and scared that no team would accept me.

Nasty comments truly only bothered me when I was younger, so I would say from 11-13 but then I started to get older and they stopped bothering me because when I play, I'm so zoned in that I don't hear it on the field only in the dugout. The all-time favorite comment of mine is "outfield bring it in" or "why not softball?" I now use all the comments as my motivation. The "go play softball", "outfield bring it in", "this isn't a sport for you" etc. makes me grind on the field and in the weight room even harder. Its incredible that most parents, coaches, and players think that words hurt because they don't. its like in one ear and out the other.

The stares I receive when I walk into the baseball complex, on a field, in the dugout, and when I warm up. Its like some people have never seen anything like it and all though that may be true for a majority it shows something. It shows that girls in baseball is not normalized when it should be. It shows that some people are raised horribly or still live in an old world when they shouldn't because time is moving forward.

The coaches that I have had from 11-16 were... lets say different. From about 11 to 13 I played on a travel ball team the coaches were like cool we have a girl on the team and I played a good amount of innings if not the whole game. But then we hit the 90ft bases and 60ft 6in mound. He suddenly changed his mind. I went from catching to having his son catch instead, went from pitching a lot of innings to pitching about 5 innings a season, went from coaches helping me get better to coach giving me 5 balls to hit while everyone else got 10. So, I moved teams at 14, tried out for another team. And I made their B team. Started training in the winter started off... ok I would say. But then coaches would start doing the same thing, would be in and out of a cage whereas the guy after me got about 15 swings. Hit groundballs and if I made error, I wouldn't get another one to redeem myself, but then the guy after me would make an error and coach would hit him another one. Then went from playing catcher and 3rd base to playing second base and the bench. With zero opportunities to show what I have to offer. Couldn't train there to get better and stronger because you had to pay extra for that stuff, and I don't come from money.

At 16, a junior in high school, I finally got to play high school ball. I made JV but was not upset about it all because I broke a barrier. I am the first female at my high school to play baseball. And the JV coach is the only reason I made the team because he saw me as a player not just my

gender whereas the varsity coach was the opposite. The JV coach gave me opportunities. I caught almost every single game with very little past balls and tons of blocks, and I batted 5 with tons of hits. A coach even came up to me after a game and was telling me all about this new organization that I should try out for. It felt like that was the first time I was ever accepted by a coach and a team. Like I was on cloud 9. But then the season ended I had to go back to travel ball where coaches and players were the complete opposite.

Now, at 17, I had to go to many tryouts because the team I was on before completely just let me go which I wasn't too upset at because I hated that organization. So, the organization that one of the opposing teams coaches told me about during high school ball was my top team. The team I wanted to make. And I did make the team! Its amazing training, making me faster, stronger, a better hitter, and is giving me more confidence than I have had.

Chapter 2

My journey

With my new travel ball team, it has been awesome! But in about a span of a few months my career took a very sharp turn in my opinion. I was asked to play a softball tournament with the top team for the 18u age group of my organization. So, I said sure why not it can't be all that bad because I know plenty of people who do both such as Kelsie Whitmore. She played baseball ever since she was 6 and then got a D1 scholarship to play softball but continues to play baseball on the USA nationals' team and in an independent professional baseball league.

I showed up to my first game and all the girls were amazing! They showed up with energy and were so excited to play, they were also very welcoming. They ask me questions about baseball and think it's the coolest thing that I've played baseball all my life and have never even picked up a softball. They helped me understand the game a little before went in to play my first ever softball game. My biggest fear was the hitting part I didn't want to do horrible and not contribute the runs for my team and not get on base, but I was very nervous for no reason. My first at bat I smoked a double up the middle off of a pitcher that is going D1 and I've never seen a team more excited.

After the first day my coach asks me to come back tomorrow because he feels like I give the girls more energy and that I'm a great athlete to just be able to transition so well from baseball to softball. And to be quite honest to everyone who reads this after that one tournament it kind of turned everything around college wise for me. After that whole tournament we came in 3rd place but then was asked by the team and coach to come to play with them throughout the summer and to go to their last fall ball tournament which is in Peoria, and I said sure ill give it another go.

Ever since my first ever softball tournament my coaches think I could play in college, but I told them my goals and the things I want to accomplish they heard me out but then told me the reality that they see. Girls playing college baseball is very rare but can be done there are more girls playing in college right now than ever before. Such as, Beth Greenwood, Marika Iyszczyk, Luisa Gauci, and Alexia Jorge. But there are also very many girls who have played baseball all their lives and get offers to play softball instead which is where I'm at. My coaches have contacted some college coaches and they are very interested in my abilities even with knowing

that my main true love is baseball. But no matter what sport or what team, I am very competitive and play my heart out no matter what.

The one thing I wish was different though that I was thinking on my way back home from the tournament is how I really wish the sport was just different. I love playing with the girls they always show up and are ready to go and very excited and always pick each other up. I wish that baseball was just normalized for girls so that they won't be so rare, and it would be easy to just make an all-girls team

Chapter 3

History

Just in case some of you reading this don't know the history of women in baseball, the league of their own is not just a movie. The movie is a very good representation of what really happened and why all-American girls' professional baseball started. But what is sad is the fact that they shut it down and didn't keep it going.

All American girl's professional baseball started during World War 2, what we call America's past time was dying out because all the men were gone fighting for our country. Which meant that baseball was dying out, they were in danger. They had to come up with ideas to stop it and have baseball continue so that money can come in. At first, they said why not have a women's softball league in the major league parks. But then that would mean re doing the fields to fit regulations. So, then they decided to change it to baseball.

There next step was to find talented girls who played either softball or baseball throughout the country. Only 280 were invited to tryouts which were in Chicago where then only 60 were chosen to become the first women to ever play professional baseball. Women playing professional baseball expanded throughout the years, adding more teams, more players, new coaches etc. but unfortunately women's professional baseball only lasted from 1943 to 1954. And they say it represents one of the most unique aspects of our nation's baseball history.

The question a majority of females have, why did they get rid of it just because the men came back from war? But the way I view it is that if major league baseball did it once, they can definitely do it again. And many women are trying their best to make that happen because we aren't trying to change the world, we are just trying to be apart of the game we love and enjoy playing.

Chapter 4

Dreams, so do what's best for you

For parents with daughters who either play softball or baseball let them live their dreams out there may be limited opportunities in 2021 but with the way things are moving for the younger ones who are just starting there will be plenty of opportunity for them in the future. When I was 14 my dream was to play on the USA Nationals team and that still is my dream. Its something that can still be done since I am only 17.

Dreams come and go, they change, they get bigger or smaller. But always no matter what happens no matter the adversity, the change, the doubt, or disbelief always follow your dreams

out no matter what it takes. But the one tricky thing with dreams is the work that must be put in to accomplish them. Always work hard. Although my athletic career is a roller coaster right now trying to figure out what I want to do and what is best for myself I will still strive to accomplish the goal I have had for a few years, and I am determined to accomplish it.

People will tell you or your daughter that she isn't good enough, she won't be able to keep up, she wont cant hang, she will feel out of place. Yes, those comments will hurt I get those till this day, those comments will bring you down and make you think about why you started to play baseball anyway. But as a parent, as a sibling, as a friend, or relative or even yourself you look at her and you tell her/ yourself that you can do it. you can continue to play. All the comments, all the convincing that you should just quit, use it as motivation, use it to fuel your hard work and make you continue to do what YOU feel is best for yourself or your daughter.

The choice is always yours but if you love the game of baseball and you say hey, I can make it far and I make it big in this game because I love it that much then you go right ahead and do it with tons and tons of support with you, support you didn't even know you had. But always do what you feel is best for you don't let anyone make that choice for you but once you play the game of baseball you will never forget it, you will never forget how to play it, you will never forget the experiences and certain opportunities, you will never forget the struggle or the fun or the madness. Baseball is a game for all it always will be and girls in baseball are just getting started so for the younger ones who read this you will have so many trails blazed to be apart of this game forever.

Chapter 5

Baseball For All

As everyone can tell my journey has been quite eventful and quite hard. But that doesn't stop me from knowing and doing what is right. This summer, summer 2021, I went to baseball for all in Maryland. Baseball for all was founded by Justine Siegal, which I know her as an absolute legend who is making things happen for girls in baseball. Lena Park is another woman who is very invested in baseball for all who helps Justine make a lot of things happen and I thank them everyday for devoting a very good chunk of their time to help a cause that is very important to so many parents and girls.

this year was the most important year for me. This year I applied to be a BFA captain, and I got accepted! We have meetings the last Sunday of every month, but we also get to mentor a junior captain which is absolutely amazing. Its amazing because they look up to you, they look to you for advice, they look to you when they need help or want you to teach them something. I love my junior captain she is a complete stud by the way. But as a captain you have a good amount of responsibility. At baseball for all we ran these hitting camps which were fantastic. Me and my fellow captains got to teach young girls from the age 7-10 our knowledge on hitting, to give them a great deal of confidence and to make sure they had fun while learning and they did. I never felt so good before until I saw a team of young girls laughing, smiling, and enjoying the game of baseball because of me. That week of baseball for all nationals I felt as if I was making a difference in women in baseball, I felt as if I was encouraging baseball because the game is growing and there will be a great deal of opportunity for the younger ones to play baseball beyond high school.

Just like my dad said your job is to play for the love of the game not for money not for tv not for fame or publicity its to play for the love of the game. To play for the little girls that look up to you and go I want to play baseball just like her. Baseball is a game where you make a lot of connections, a lot of lifelong friendships and that is exactly what baseball for all does for people. I have met so many amazing people through baseball for all and I can not thank them enough for it because the things that have done are things that I will remember forever and things I will share with others just like I'm doing right this second.

Chapter 6

Women in baseball to give you hope

You watch baseball games on tv and think if only girls could just play or coach like the big leaguers. Although women aren't playing major league baseball, yet they are coaching it. and you may believe it you may not believe it and think well if they were we would here about it or see it and if you don't believe I am here to put hope into your mind.

Let's start with Rachel Balkovec. In 2019 she signed with the New York Yankees and became the first woman to hold a full-time hitting coach position. But her story is a wild one. Many of the teams she tried to work with didn't want her all because of her gender and straight up told her that. She could of took legal action but chose a different route instead, instead she chose to write her name n the application as 'Rae' and one coach answered and was surprised to hear that it was a female and asked if he could call tomorrow and she didn't hear from him after

that. She then was a strength and conditioning coach for baseball and worked her way up from there. Then after a few years she joined with the Astros when she started to work with hitting coaches and decided that's what she wanted to do. So she went back to school to learn more of the science and body movement in hitters swings and then heard from a hitting coordinator that works with the Yankees and got the job.

Alyssa Nakken the first ever female baseball coach, who coaches for the San Francisco Giants. She has worked with giants for a little while and then decided she wanted to be an assistant coach for them. She is working on being the first base coach, so she watched Antoan Richardson who is the first base coach full time. She was able to coach first base in an exhibition game and made history. Although she may not be out there every day, she is suited up every game they play, and she is in the club house learning from there hoping one day to be the full time first base coach.

Rachel Folden who became the first female coach for the cub's organization in 2019. She was hired to be a minor league hitting coach and became the first woman in an on-field position in the organization. Entering a male dominated sport as a female was the least of Foldens concerns because she knew she had all the qualifications for the job. Her major concern was being considered a diversity hire which the cubs quickly dismissed. Folden then went out to say that many females don't apply for the job because they don't think they will get hired so they don't even attempt it or go for it. So, Foldens advice to those women is to just do your job really really well and be really qualified for it and then when you feel like its your time you go after it.

All these females are breaking barriers for younger girls and even girls the same age as them, they are breaking barriers for females in general. This in my opinion is the biggest motivation and the biggest thing for females to look forward to. Opportunities are slowly opening up in higher positions and lower positions. Which means to keep fighting till you can't fight anymore, push through the struggles, and keep climbing up the mountain until you reach your peak because baseball will always be your sport no matter your gender no matter the talent, baseball will always be your sport so do not give up even when it seems like the only option.

Chapter 7

Advice

I know parents or girls may be lost sometimes, not knowing what to do when it gets hard, not knowing what to say or who to go to because it feels like you can't trust anyone. But you have a whole community that you can trust and talk to about your struggles and what you are going through.

When I started playing at a young age I thought and still think that baseball is the greatest game in the world but then as I got older, I started seeing fewer and fewer girls playing. I thought I was all alone, like I didn't have anyone to talk to and no one understood how hard it really is. It truly felt like I was just trapped in this room but with tons of people but like I was the only one there and no one truly understood. But I promise you that you are far from being alone.

Mean comments, stares, people talking under their breathe, people encouraging you to quit, etc. all of that comes with being a female in a male dominated sport. But when you hear people say things such as: "it's a girl bring it in", "a girl is pitching let's go dingers all day" or something along those lines or even worse you channel that. Easier said than done I know. But you just close your eyes count to about 8 take a deep breathe and you let it motivate you. You let it get channeled into so much energy. And when you feel that energy throughout your whole body you feel so good. Your up to bat and hear the kids or coaches talk you get angry right? And when you do you step out and make that anger into energy determination but also do not let that change your hitting approach. And if you are a parent reading this you let your daughter know that she, has it you never let their confidence, get low because she is great.

Girls as players or as coaches we are just different, and I think I truly realized this just this year. We listen more than the guys, we try and comprehend what is being taught to us, and if a coach or someone in baseball tells us were doing something wrong and tells us how to fix it we work and work at it until we do fix it. and another, easier way to put this, which is one of my favorite sayings that I have made up is, a majority of the guys in baseball or even the whole world live in black and white still or they are just this big rain cloud. They view this as a black and white movie when black and white movies aren't a thing anymore or just this huge rain cloud that is never ending. Us girls are the sun the sun after the rain that makes this big, bright, colorful rainbow which is us girls in baseball. So, they have no idea what to do with us they don't like that we shine brighter than they do so they try and get rid of the rainbow but they just cant. We are all rainbows in a black and white sport just trying to make everyone and the sport just as bright as we are.

Chapter 8

Hard work

As many of you girls or parents have heard is that we aren't as strong as the guys or don't have as much velocity or power. Which yea sure maybe that is true but then that means just one thing and one thing only. And that thing is called hard work.

Talent is a gift to have and if you have it, you should be very grateful. But talent only takes you so far, probably up to the age of 13. Then if you haven't been you need to start getting after it. Lifting and practicing everyday or as much as possible. Hard work will always beat talent but if you have both, if you work hard and you have talent that is the greatest combination someone in this sport can have.

Now one big thing in this beautiful sport is lifting. Hitting the gym and lifting weights is a very key thing to getting better, faster, more power and explosiveness. But the thing with lifting is that in baseball you don't want to get too big which for us ladies is not a concern but still be cautious with it. The reason being is then our bodies are more prone to injury which is not something anyone enjoys. Another important thing is making sure you work all muscles and components. Components such as agility, arm mobility, speed etc. all of those play a big part in your game play so it's important to incorporate those things at least once or twice a week or implement it in your weightlifting. It is also very important that you are consistent with lifting and push yourself to be better and go heavier.

Practice and reps are also an important part. If you have practice its ok to show up early with your mom or dad or sibling and get reps in hitting or groundballs before practice or staying later to do so. If you don't have practice, go outside hit off a tee or just swinging the bat or throwing a tennis ball against a wall to get groundballs, working on footwork or fundamentals. Because in baseball all the slight little things make a huge difference even though we think it doesn't. extra reps will never hurt you, only help you because one thing my dad told me is that you can't get better sitting on the couch. But one thing with extra reps, listen to your body there is a difference between good reps and tired reps. Tired reps cause bad habits, if you feel yourself getting tired don't keep going step back take a breather for a minute and then get back in there.

Another thing about hard work is eating right. If you have a high metabolism which is the stuff that burns calories or body fat then eating junk food or greasy foods you can get away with but getting the right amount of protein and carbs in is also a very important component.

Although you may think eating before a game won't do anything or you may be too nervous to even eat its important that you still do. Because food is our source of energy and when you play you waste all that energy. You may even say well I have energy when you start to play you then realize you aren't as energized as you thought you were which is ok because some of you may be just learning your bodies which is ok because in baseball you need to understand how your body works to use it correctly. Hydration is also a key component as well. During games or practices water is good but Gatorade is more ideal just because it has the electrolytes and carbohydrates that give your body the energy you need during the game.

Now I bet a lot of you reading are wondering how does all of this have anything to do with working hard. Well, this is all the little things most people don't even realize matters till they start to do it. They don't realize that it does increase your performance which is the main goal. To get you ladies stronger, more explosive, more power and more speed.

Chapter 9

Mental toughness

Mental toughness is a huge part of baseball but also life. You can go 4-4 with a few amazing plays and the next game go 0-4 with 3 errors. It's a humbling sport. And especially ladies in this sport we must be even more mentally tough than the guys do because we deal with so much more than just the sport as sad as it is to say. So, working on it is just as important as practicing and working out.

One of the biggest things that I have learned from amazing ladies who work with mlb and coach the USA nationals' team is that worrying about the things that we CAN NOT control is usually always are biggest problem. A coach's decision, your teammates attitude or play, the umpires call etc. is all out of our control. And that is a major thing that I have learned that I never even realized I needed to know because trying to teach yourself that is the biggest help even if you don't think so. What we can worry about that is in our control is our attitude and our play which in reality is the most important thing. Ways we are able to work on focusing on things we can control is by noticing them meaning not getting angry or upset with certain things. We need to step back take a big deep breath count to 10 in our heads and get right back in the right mind set. Or another way is reflecting on the practice or game/tournament by writing down what

went well and what went bad, what made you angry or upset, what made you happy and hyped. Writing all of that down then rereading it is a way of realizing things you may not of realized just thinking of it.

Throwing our equipment seems to be something that everyone does when we strike out or make an error or ground out etc. which even major leaguers do but before you throw your helmet or your glove or slam your bat on the ground think about what it will solve. What will throwing equipment do for you? Nothing, it won't do anything at all it wont fix what happened and it wont change the outcome because it already happened. Bad things are going to happen in baseball its part of the game. Everyone strikeouts and makes errors even the pros do. But what we need to remember to do is flush it, think about what you did wrong for a split second no longer than you let it go. Dwelling on mistakes that happens to everyone doesn't just change the mood it changes your play. It gives people an "I don't care" attitude so they continue to make errors and have bad at bats all because we let it snowball out of control instead of keeping it to a minimum, we let that one mistake turn into many. So, in order to not let that happen you flush it right away you think about what to fix after the game but during the game you just drop it because you have a job to do.

Now, I know all I've been talking about in the previous paragraphs are game stuff, but another factor of mental toughness is things that happen in your life. Things that may be going on that upset you, anger you, or frustrate you. Things that may cause anxiety or cause you to feel pressure which causes you to try too hard. Now we can't prevent things in life from happening because its life there will be ups and downs. But if something in your life is going on and you have a game that day in my own personal experience, I know it sucks you feel like you suck and

just don't belong to even touch a baseball field because you are just dealing with so much. But a thing I've learned just from going through certain things during baseball season is to let it fuel you. Let it process in your mind before every inning, every play, every at bat take a deep breath pick some dirt up, look at the sky, and tell yourself you're playing a game you love and its all-ok right in this very moment. When you are between the white lines just focus on the white ball with red seams. You got it. you are the greatest in your sport no matter what you are going through.

Chapter 10

Conclusion/summary

Now everything you may have read may have been a lot or jumbled in your mind but things you didn't know, things you learned, things you already knew but reminded you, or anything along those lines. You learned about me and my story, where I'm coming from and why I felt the need to do this.

Baseball is a hard sport and being a female in baseball is also hard so I'm just speaking from my point of view, my knowledge, and my thoughts. It may be different than yours it may be different than everyone's but that's ok because everyone has different thoughts and experiences. But in conclusion of this whole book, you have a place in baseball no matter what. You belong in this sport more than you believe because you love it more than most people. So never give up, make the most of every opportunity you get.

I've mentioned this before but just in case you forgot it remember my little saying. Girls in baseball whether it be players, coaches, managers, founders of certain organizations etc. are rainbows. We are rainbows popping up in a black and white world so no one quite knows what to do with us because they have never seen it before. So we need to continue to shine our bright colors hoping that some day we make the rest of the world have color or at least have the rest of the world understand the color that we have and just give us an opportunity, just give us a chance.

