

Brakettes Softball

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Editor: Bob Baird

Joan Joyce gave all of us such great memories; and they will live on forever

It's been two weeks since the passing of Joan Joyce. News of her death spread faster than one of her signature sling-shot pitches. Television, radio, internet was all saturated with coverage of her life. Most of those conducting the interviews, writing the stories, or re-stating her remarkable feats probably never heard of her or saw this ultra-talented woman play softball, golf, volleyball, or basketball.

During my travels since her passing March 26, I've been amazed by how many folks have said to me, "wow, so sad to hear about Joan. I thought she would live forever." Multiply that by 10 the number of inquiries, condolences, texts, e-mails, or other social media contacts that Stratford Brakettes Manager John Stratton has fielded. Her legend will stand the test of time. Yes, Joannie was a 'larger-than-life figure.'

I was blessed to have seen Joan perform her athletic magic. I was honored to call her a friend. And I, too, always thought that Joan Joyce was "invincible!" Joan was much more than a summation of statistics, or a *Who's Who* list of accomplishments in her brilliant athletic career. Career victories, no-hitters, strikeouts, MVP awards, All-America selections, and National Championships are impressive. She was not defined alone by them. Joan was a warm, caring, intelligent, passionate, and super athletically talented woman. She was a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a friend, a mentor, a teammate, a coach, et al, to the people in her life.

If there ever was a regret, you could probably say that Joan was born too soon. Imagine her playing now in her prime! End of conversation about 'who was the greatest female athlete of all time'?"

Aliya Catanzarita, Great-Great-Granddaughter of 1947 Brakette Tina Basso, Earns Spot on Team Roster



Aliya Catanzarita demonstrates her pitching prowess as a member of the Cheshire Girls Softball League in 2011 at Frank DeLuca Hall of Fame Field; throwing out the traditional first pitch before a Stratford Brakettes doubleheader against the Puerto Rico National Team. Unbeknownst to

of the inaugural 1947 Raybestos Brakettes, making Aliya the first off-spring of a former player to make it to softball's bigtime! Aliya, a sophomore, now plays for Hofstra University. 2011 Brakettes (L-R), are current Hofstra assistant Kristyn Sandberg, Mandie Fishback, Boston Univ. head coach Ashley Waters, Rachele Fico, and Steffi Call.

LAUREN PITNEY: "She's Backkkkkkkkkkkkkkk" as 2022 Select 18U Brakettes Manager

Lauren Pitney, who piloted the Select 18U Brakettes to a successful maiden 2021 season, has returned to manage this year's team. "It was an unexpected announcement, but a very welcomed one," according to Brakettes General Manager **Bob Baird**. Pitney had a brilliant four-year (2017-2020) Brakettes playing career at second base and led the team to three WMS National Championships. A former St. Joseph High all-stater and four-year standout at Manhattan College, Pitney accepted an assistant coaching position at Manhattan last fall. Baird added, "things just didn't work out the way she (Lauren) hoped for", and she resigned prior to the start of the Jaspers' season.

"We're delighted to have her back and we thank **Jack Pritchard**, a member of the Brakettes Board of Directors, for stepping aside to make it happen. Pritchard, who had a remarkable playing and coaching career in both baseball and softball, will remain as an assistant, along with first-year Associate Head Coach **Cassie Rusczyk**, a former Brakettes player from 2014-2016 who is now head coach at The Gunnery School in Washington, CT.

Last season the Select Brakettes finished runner-up in the 13th annual Women's Major Softball National Championship tournament, won by the Stratford Brakettes. Only three players return from that 32-9-1 ballclub, which won two invitationals and finished second in another.

Another star-studded array of talent awaits their June 14 debut at Frank DeLuca Hall of Fame Field. Six of the players are currently in college and seven are high school seniors. The returnees are outfielder **Juliette Zito** of Woodbridge (Amity H.S. and Wheaton, MA, College), **Jordan Rossi** of Stamford (Stamford H.S. and Washington University in St. Louis), and **Kelly Pritchard** of Orange (Amity H.S. and Worcester Poly). All three are enjoying outstanding seasons. Zito is leading 10-6 Wheaton with a .423 batting average and 11 RBI. Rossi has a 2-0 record for WU with a .215 ERA in eight appearances. Pritchard is hitting .361 with nine extra base hits and 15 RBI for WPI, in addition to a 2-1 mound mark in eight appearances and 26.2 innings.

Seymour's **Erin Liffrieri**, the MVP in the CIAC Class M championships last year, has a 3-1 record at the University of Bridgeport in 27.1 innings. **Milytza Perez** of Wallingford's Maloney High is a pitcher/utility at Molloy College. Catcher/infielder **Kayla Rosario** of East Haven is a catcher, but she is not playing this year at Southern CT. St. Joseph shortstop **Maddy Fitzgerald** of Bethel has returned to practice at Bryant University following a lengthy recuperation from injury but is taking a medical redshirt year to preserve her four-year athletic eligibility.

The high school seniors are as follows: Catcher/utility **Morgan Tainter** is a talented catcher/outfielder at Norwich Free Academy, and her former batterymate on the Southington Knights, **Emily Rerick** of Newtown, is a touted pitcher/utility player at Immaculate High in Danbury. **Ava Slavinsky**, an All-Colonial pick in the SWC last year, is the top player back for Joel Barlow, which is undergoing a rebuilding season. **Outfielder Rose Reitmeyer** of Woodlands High School in Beacon Falls earned all-state laurels in 2021. Cheshire's **Catherine Palmer**, a first baseman/outfielder, plays for Stratford Brakettes Associate Head **Coach Kristine Botto Drust**, while infielder/outfielder **Molly Lennon** of Litchfield, is the standout at Kent School.

SOFTBALL POTPURRI

Go to the Brakettes website, www.brakettes.com, to get your application for our fifth annual golf tournament, which has been renamed to honor the late Joan Joyce. Date is Saturday, June 25 at Short Beach Par-3 course, just down the road from Frank DeLuca Hall of Fame Field. Also, there is a form for hole sponsorships. All proceeds from the event benefit our three softball teams. . . UConn has compiled a 22-13 record and 11-2 mark in the Big East. Shortstop **Briana Marcelino** is second in hitting a .360 with 13 extra base hits and 18 RBI. She shares the home run lead at five with Brakettes teammate **Jana Sanden**, who also leads Huskies with 23 RBI . . . Manhattan shortstop **Lauren Rende** tops Manhattan in hitting with a .328 average and nine RBI, while catcher/second baseman **Kaitlyn Flood** is hitting .293 with two home runs . . . **Charlee Horton** is enjoying a strong season at Weatherford, TX, College where she tops the cub with 20 RBI and four homers, dividing her time between DH and catching. . . Tufts University is off to a 16-4 start, in large part to left-handed sophomore pitching **Sophia DiCocco** (Junior Brakettes star) who is 6-2 with a 0.62 ERA in 67 2/3 innings. Sacred Heart catcher/DH **Jan Mowad** of Prospect is a first-year Junior Brakette

and she leads the Pioneers in hitting at .328 six extra base hits and eight RBI. Fairfield's **Olivia Vadas**, another Junior Brakette, recently picked up a win with a 7-2 decision over UMass-Lowell, which features shortstop **Lea White**, a first-year Stratford Brakettes player. Pitcher **Sarah Lawton**, the graduate of Florida Gulf Coast, leads the SHU staff with five wins . . . **Kiana Robinson** of Hamden, a Junior Brakettes infielder, is second in hitting at the University of Bridgeport with a .429 average, while first-year Stratford Brakettes outfielder **Meg McFarland** of Monroe has a .299 batting average with 16 RBI. Pitcher/DH **Sam Schiebe**, another Stratford Brakettes pitcher, is 5-5 and is hitting .314.