

Features



Stevenson Becomes Softball Tiger For A Week

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For hundreds of Mizzou football fans, the ground at Faurot Field is pretty “sacred ground.” So they would probably be surprised to know that this last week there were over 200 girls on that field ... playing softball.

That’s right ... the place where the Mizzou Tigers will play football this fall was converted last week for Tiger Softball camp.

And Kendra Stevenson of Dexter was there ... playing softball practically from sunrise to late at night with the coaching staff of the Mizzou Tigers softball program.

Stevenson just finished her freshman year – and first high school softball season - at Dexter High School. She was a member of a young Bearcat softball squad that graduated just one senior – Alec Jackson. Stevenson and Jackson shared pitching duties for the Lady ‘Cats this spring.

Faurot was just one of the fields where the girls worked with Tiger softball head coach Ehren Earlywine and other Mizzou coaches.

In just four seasons, Earlywine has led the Missouri softball program to almost unheard of levels of success in such a short time. In his first season, he took a team that posted just 26 wins and had a losing record the year before and turned them into a 40-win squad that finished the year with a regional bid and a top-20 national ranking.

“There were 250 girls there,” Stevenson said. Most were from Missouri, with some girls from out-of-state as well joining the camp.

“We did defensive drills – with infield, outfield, pitchers and catchers,” she explained. “The first day I went to the catchers, the second day I went pitchers, and the third day I went to infielders. We could go to different drills.”

Participating in drills helped Stevenson overall game skills.

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She said that while she pitched some this past season, she really likes catching and playing infield. The girls also did a hitting circuit.

“We hit off T’s, did front toss, and we did different things with the girls (Mizzou team players) who were there helping us,” she said.

One of the highlights for Stevenson was being in the Mizzou Athletic Training Complex. Stevenson said they had classes in the Onofrio Team Room – named for Tiger football coaching legend Al Onofrio.

“Coach Earlywine would have a DVD up on the screen and would teach us the fundamentals,” she said. Earlywine would compare batting skills of professional softball players to video of previous campers, pointing out the finer points of skills.

“He showed us the absolutes and what you need to do to hit the ball well,” she said.

“We had a tour of the training center,” she said. “It is so nice! I want to hang out there! When we were on the tour the football players were there. They all walked out of the football locker room - they were giants!”

Stevenson not only plays on the Bearcat spring softball squad, and plays basketball with the Lady ‘Cats, she plays on a summer team based in Cape Girardeau, the Orange Crush.

It was a week full of hard work and long days, but Stevenson said that looking ahead to next spring it was well worth the effort.

“I learned a lot of new stuff this week,” she said. “It was all good.”

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[Stevenson Becomes Softball Tiger For A Week
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was first published on

Written by News

Date: June 26th 2011



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