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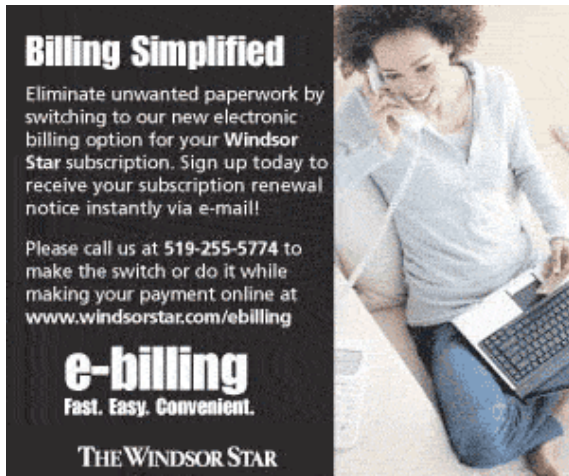
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Baggio to play for pay in Italy

Holy Names grad signs pro softball contract

Mary Caton, Windsor Star

Published: Saturday, April 19, 2008

Softball has given Michelle Baggio a lot of great memories and a wonderful education.

Now, it's providing an unexpected chance to play professionally in Europe.

The 22-year-old Holy Names grad leaves Friday to play second base for the Titano Hornets of the Italian Professional Softball League.

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The Hornets play in the country's top division, at a level comparable to NCAA division I programs. They'll provide her a salary and a place to live.

"I just signed my contract and I still can't believe it," Baggio said of recent developments. "I would have paid them to play. I thought I had played my last competitive game last year with the university."

Baggio had an outstanding four-year career with the University of Detroit Mercy Titans, which ended in the spring of 2007.

In her senior season, she batted .366 with six home runs and 27 rbi.

She earned Horizon League player of the week honours once and the team named her defensive player of the year.

FOURTH ALL-TIME

Baggio finished fourth on the all-time career home run list with 15 and she made the league's honour roll all four years.

In 2002 and 2003, she played for the Canadian national junior team, competing in the World Juniors in China and the Pan Am Games in Mexico.

Having graduated with a bachelor's degree in education, Baggio has spent this past year working at UDM as a grad assistant and she's a substitute teacher with the Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board.

A European scout looking for North American talent got in touch with Baggio's coach at UDM and soon Baggio was emailing the Titano coach in San Marino, Italy.

"It's a perfect opportunity," Baggio said of her impending four-month adventure.

"I've spoken to some other players from the Canadian junior team who have gone over there and they have nothing but good things to say about it. The softball is competitive and the style of living, they say, it's a life experience I'm never going to forget."

Baggio will also get to play in the European Cup of Softball in Holland this September before returning to UDM to complete a masters in education.

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