

'BATTLING OBSTACLES

Athlete Plays Through Challenges



A dual sport athlete setting out to prove that she is just as good as the rest of her team, freshman Charlie Sheckells faces a challenge that the rest of her team does not. She was born with just one arm. But that doesn't stop her from playing the sports she loves: softball and basketball.

Sheckells has what is called Amniotic Band Syndrome. While she was in the womb, a band detached from the amniotic sack and wrapped around her arm and stopped its growth.

Despite this obstacle, Sheckells started playing softball when she was in first grade, and then a year later began playing basketball as well. She wanted to play to see if she could actually do it and have fun with it.

"It's been hard; people assume that I'm not as good as them," Sheckells said.

Sheckells made the JV softball team and plays second base.

"She is an inspiration for what she has overcome and how she is able to do the things that she does," JV softball coach Matt Schweitzer said.

The team's practice normally consists of warmups,

throwing, defense work and hitting, sometimes ending with conditioning as well. Sheckells does things that her teammates can do but in her own way. Her teammates treat her just like any other player.

"She is an inspiration for what she has overcome and how she is able to do the things that she does." -- JV softball coach Matt Schweitzer

Before high school, Sheckells' biggest obstacle was not with teammates, but instead with the coaches who she said often tried to give her an easy way out and assumed she could not do what everyone else could.

"The coaches make me do easier stuff, then I do what everyone else is doing, and it surprises them," Sheckells said.

While she doesn't do

things the same way, she does the same things. Sheckells enrolled in Strength and Conditioning class to help her in all aspects of her sports.

"Most of the stuff she does is modified. We find a way to do the same thing as everyone else, and she does a great job with it," Strength and Conditioning teacher Phil Lite said.

It is her goal to go out and work hard to get better. The practices normally last between two and two and a half hours after school unless it is game day.

Sheckells said she plans to continue to play basketball by trying out for the girls team during the winter season. She got the chance to practice with the team some over the summer.

And in her sports so far, Sheckells has managed to prove her old coaches who doubted her wrong by reaching the goals she set for herself.

"Just because I have one arm doesn't mean I can't be as good as the others," Sheckells said.

Written by Haylee Roberts

While holding her glove with her shoulder, freshman Charlie Sheckells throws the ball at the JV softball game on Sept. 8 against Oak Park High School, coming away with a team win. Sheckells has worked on her technique since first grade. "She performs to the best of her abilities, which is nothing less than what is expected from everyone else," coach Matt Schweitzer said. *Photo by Emilie Kerr*

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