

Mary Lou Retton, the famed 1984 Olympic gymnastics gold medalist, once said that “Trophies carry dust. Memories last forever.” For five National Professional Fastpitch (NPF) players, memories of Little League Baseball and Softball have served as the motivation that has helped them excel both personally and professionally. Here are some of their stories:



Cat Osterman



Big Cat

Long before **Cat Osterman** was dominating her college and Olympic opponents, she was learning her craft in Little League in Houston. Only later did she become the first University of Texas freshman to be named Big 12 Conference Player of the Week and the first to pitch a perfect game in Longhorns softball history.

Osterman would become the NCAA Division I softball all-time leader in strikeouts per game. She also played on the gold medal-winning USA women’s softball team at the 2004 Olympics and the silver medal-winning team in the 2008 Games, and is currently excelling as a pitcher for the NPF’s Rockford Thunder.

But the defining moment in Osterman’s career came in Little League Softball when she was 11 years old. “Because of the rule that limited the number of innings a pitcher can throw, our team needed someone to pitch for an inning or two,” says Osterman, who threw 20 no-hitters during her college career. “I volunteered without ever having tried it before. Needless to say, I fell in love with pitching.”

She’s Got Game

Playing Little League Baseball for the Northwest Tampa (Fla.) Little League team before eventually moving to Colorado, **Nicole Trimboli** was always the only girl on the team.

“The first day of practice, none of the boys wanted to play catch with me because I was a girl,” she says. “Once we started practice, I threw harder and hit farther than most of the boys. From then on, my teammates were my friends and always stuck up for me whenever other teams would pick on ‘the girl.’”



Nicole Trimboli

Diamonds Are Forever

Five Little League grads share memories from their journeys to National Professional Fastpitch.

Trimboli played baseball until she was 13, and then switched to fastpitch softball, where she truly found her niche. Later, she went on to play softball at the University of Nebraska, where she was named to four All-Conference and two All-Midwest Region teams, while earning Big 12 All-Tournament recognition twice in four years.

“Getting involved with Little League at such an early age helped me develop so many skills,” she says. “It continually made me work just a little harder, so that I could prove myself. Little League was one of the many experiences that helped make me the ballplayer I am today.”

Trimboli made her NPF debut with the Akron Racers in 2004 and is currently a member of the Chicago Bandits, splitting time in the outfield and at first base. She also coaches softball at Division II Colorado School of Mines and teaches at the National Baseball and Softball Academy in Wheeling, Ill.

Firewoman

Angela Tincher was 9 years old when she tried out for Little League Softball. Thirteen years later, she was an All-American pitcher for Virginia Tech and was selected No. 3 overall in the 2008 NPF draft by the Racers.



Angela Tincher

Tincher still recalls the day she decided she wanted to pitch — it remains one of her fondest memories. “I wanted to play a position where I could be involved with every pitch of the game,” the Virginia native says. “I pitched two innings that year to decide whether it was something I really wanted to commit to.”

“Little League introduced me to the game of softball. Playing on our all-star team showed me the opportunities that softball could bring,” Tincher adds. “I gained new friends and teammates, traveled to new places, and learned that every season comes to an end — some earlier than you would like. Little League taught me to set and achieve goals and how to become passionate about something you love.”

Tincher is third on the NCAA Division I softball career strikeouts list, and set ACC

single-season records for wins (38) and strikeouts (617) in 2007. She was also named to the 2008 All-NPF Team.

Power Baller

India Chiles was barely out of diapers when she began her softball career in Louisville, Ky., at age 4. She eventually played college softball for Tennessee, where she was the SEC’s second-best hitter as a junior.



India Chiles

The moment she remembers the most from her Little League Softball career was the day she hit her first home run. “I remember I went to the plate and took what I thought was an ordinary swing, but the ball went over the fence,” says Chiles, who now plays outfield for the NPF’s Racers. “The girls from both teams looked at me like I was some type of softball goddess. From those times came the college dream, and the professional life of softball that I never could have imagined.”

Still, just playing the game meant more to her than personal accolades. “I knew I was good at softball,” Chiles recalls, “but I really didn’t care about all that. I had great coaches who really stressed competition, but also having fun.”

Team Player

In 2004, **Carri Leto Martin** was named Northwestern’s NCAA Division I Woman of the Year. During her time there, she also was a second-team All-Big Ten Conference selection three times on her way to becoming a three-time All-Star in the NPF.

The memory that Martin most cherishes about her Little League Softball days is the time she spent with her teammates on and off the field. “I started playing Little League when I was 10, but I wasn’t sure if it was the sport for me,” says Martin, who now plays second base and outfield for the NPF’s New England Riptide. “But I realized how much I enjoyed being part of a team and enjoyed the idea of all my teammates working toward the same goal.”

Martin credits her time on Little League Softball diamonds with teaching her the basic skills of hitting a ball and becoming a versatile fielder, but the time spent with her friends will always be even more important to her.



Carri Leto Martin

To these five young superstar softball players, experiences and time spent on local Little League fields meant more than any trophy they could ever win. ♦

For more information on Little League’s partnership with National Professional Fastpitch, log on to www.LittleLeague.org/Learn_More/partners.htm.

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