

Player of the Year: Steed gives noble senior-year finish

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Maisie Steed

Every year, a coach finds a few players they can count on in a game. Even as a freshman in 2008, Maisie Steed was one of those of players.

“She’s been our leadoff hitter all four years she’s been with us,” Hillgrove softball coach Jason Campbell said. “She set the tone for how the game is played out, even as a freshman. Once she gets on base, the defense has to adjust for her, and we have to do things a certain way because she’s on base. She’s been that good every year on and off the field.”

A first-team Class AAAA all-state selection as a freshman, Steed has been a model of consistency for the Lady Hawks, culminating in one of her best seasons as part of the program.

Steed, a senior third baseman, helped guide Hillgrove (29-11) to the Region 4AAAAA championship and a third-place finish in Class AAAAA in the Lady Hawks’ first appearance at the state finals in Columbus. Steed ended the year with a .389 batting average, 22 RBIs, 57 runs, seven doubles, five home runs and 16 walks from the leadoff spot. She was also a perfect 39-for-39 on stolen bases.

“She was our best hitter, and usually you put your best hitter in the fourth spot batting clean-up,” Campbell said. “But we put her at leadoff because she was that good and that dependable. She’s a natural leader who never let her talent get ahead of the game.

“She was always productive, even with the ups and downs every year. She’s a self-motivator and the type of kid you wish you had a whole team of. She makes your job easier.”

Steed, the 2011 Marietta Daily Journal/Cobb County Softball Player of the Year, credited her ability to her a higher power.

“I think I owe it all to God and the things that he’s blessed me with,” said Steed, who was committed to play softball at Kentucky. “I’ve really come to realize that in the past couple of months. That’s what I wrote about in my essay on my Kentucky application. I think (God has) blessed me with hard work, and obviously athletic ability, and I’m so thankful for that.”

Unfortunately for Steed, she found out she was named the county player of the year under less than ideal circumstances.

“It got ruined for me,” she said. “I got a text message from somebody that said, ‘Congratulations,’ and I said, ‘For what?’ And they said, ‘You’re player of the year.’ I was like, ‘What are you talking about?’ and I immediately turned and asked coach Campbell what they were talking about. He was like, ‘They ruined it for you,’ and I said, ‘You have to tell me, there’s technology these days.’”

“I was excited, but I was also upset because coach Campbell didn’t get the chance to tell me, but it was still a good feeling.”

Campbell felt Steed is well-deserving of the honor.

“She is a five-tool player,” he said. “She can run, hit for power and slap for power, play infield or outfield, play good defense, run the bases — she can do it all. There are no holes in her game. She’s well-deserving of all her honors. She’s just a solid ball player.”

For Steed, finishing off her senior season competing for a state championship in Columbus with her teammates was a great way to end her high school softball career.

“I’m so proud of everybody,” she said. “They really stepped it up this year. There was no losing. We refused to lose. It was such an awesome feeling knowing that everybody had each other’s backs. There was no drama going on, and it was all for one, one for all.

“We finally got Campbell’s goal to get him to Columbus, and we did even better than anybody ever thought. It was because everybody got along, and everybody wanted to work hard and had each other’s back. The whole season sticks out. I’m most proud of everyone’s will to win and refusing to lose and that’s sticks out for me.

“It’s not a one-person team, and I’m proud to have been a part of it and to be with all of the girls.”

Campbell is sad to see Steed go.

“It will be hard to replace her,” he said. “I’ve been coaching a long time, and I don’t believe I’ve ever had a player — softball or baseball — to be as productive as she was all four years. She’s been that good.”