Blue Raiders announce Catalano as pitching coach

Tennessee native won 2011 AAC Player of the Year at Union College

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - The Middle Tennessee softball team has announced the hiring of Falon Catalano as assistant coach/pitching coach for the 2012-13 season. Catalano spent two seasons at Riverdale High School as an assistant coach for MT head coach Jeff Breeden prior to joining the Blue Raider staff.

Breeden was excited to announce the hiring, both because of the familiarity with Catalano and what she brings to this program.

"She brings a quality person with an unending work ethic and a passion for teaching pitching," Breeden said.

That work ethic will be on display early, as she looks to bring a new era of pitching to the Blue Raiders.

"The main improvement I'd like to see is for us to drop our ERAs below 2.00, both team and individual," Catalano said.

While that may seem a tough task for a group that finished 2012 with a team ERA of 4.52, Catalano's past as a dominating pitcher should inject some immediate energy into the group that graduated just one member, Caty Jutson, who led the team in nearly every category, including wins (8), strikeouts (48) and innings pitched (134.0).

Several talented pitchers remain, including Kailey McDougald (team leading 3.36 ERA), Shelby Stinnett (36 strikeouts) and Caitlin McClure (only four home runs allowed).

Catalano will also inherit Ashley Stassin, an incoming freshman from Menifee, Calif., who had a 2.62 ERA and 27 strikeouts in 26.2 innings pitched her senior year at Paloma Valley High School.

With four returners and just one newcomer, the Blue Raiders will have plenty of options

"Our goal is to find the formula that works best for our team," Catalano said. "We want to put ourselves in the best situation to win games."

Prior to joining the coaching world, Catalano began her collegiate career at Lipscomb, where she was 1-0 in four appearances from the pitching circle with 11 strikeouts in 12.2 innings pitched. Catalano hit .308 in 26 plate appearances and was 2-of-4 on stolen base attempts.

After taking time off from 2007-09, Catalano played one season at Motlow State, where she went 14-6 with 152 strikeouts in just 137.0 innings pitched to lead the team. She also allowed just 25 earned runs and 37 walks while accumulating a 1.28 ERA. Catalano was also an asset from the plate and finished the year hitting .319 with nine doubles and 28 RBI in 144 at-bats.

Catalano moved on to Union College in 2011, where she led the team in nearly every hitting and pitching category and was named the 2011 Appalachian Athletic Conference Player of the Year. She went 10-5 in 17 starts with a 1.53 ERA. Catalano also struck out 149 batters and held the opposing hitters to a league-leading batting average of .177. Catalano holds several single season and career records at Union, including strikeouts in a game (16), season and career saves (4) and season and career no-hitters (3).

On the offensive side, Catalano hit .340 to pace the team and had 13 doubles, three home runs, 35 RBI and a team high .435 on-base percentage. She also was 10-of-12 in stolen base attempts and was second highest on the team with a .971 fielding percentage.

Catalano also excelled in the classroom at UC, earning an all-academic AAC selection.

As a Tennessee native, Catalano played at Coffee County Central High School from 2001 to 2003 and at Riverdale High School for Breeden from 2003 to 2005. During her senior year at Riverdale, Catalano was 24-4 with a 0.32 ERA, 301 strikeouts and three no-hitters for the Warriors.

"I've known Coach Breeden for several years," Catalano said. "I've played for him and coached with him, and I'm excited to continue that here."

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