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SPORTS *Yellow Jackets*

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Erika Miller completes record-setting softball career at Cedarville College

CEDARVILLE, Ohio -- Willard High School product Erika Miller doesn't mind being where the action is when it comes to playing softball. She has certainly proven that during the past four years as a member of the Cedarville College softball program. She graduated earlier this month as the school's all-time leading hitter and as arguably the finest third baseman the Yellow Jackets have ever had.

Miller finished the season with a .373 career batting average to set the record by six points. However, at mid-season the idea of moving to the top of the school's all-time list hardly seemed to be a possibility. Miller was hitting a modest .344 and had gone hitless in seven of the 20 games played.

"Right from the start of the season I think I was trying too hard," explained Erika, who is the daughter of Tom and Pat Miller of Monroeville. "I relaxed as the season progressed and was pleased with how things finished up."

In the final half of the season, Miller went on a 20-for-32 tear for a .625 batting average during an 11-game hitting streak. The outburst helped her finish with a career-high .441 batting average which not only was tops on the team, but ranked second in the Mid-Ohio Conference.

Besides being a prolific hitter, Miller anchored the Yellow Jacket defense at third base. She led the club in assists again this spring with 92 and was in on 13 of the team's school-record 20 double plays.

Like all good players who occupy the "hot corner," playing down the line is a must. Staring down the barrel of the opponent's bat is normal.

"I never had a problem playing that close," said Miller, who was tabbed team MVP and to the All-MOC First Team. "Primarily, it helped me to cover the bunt better."

Miller covered the bunt and then some at third. She owns four of the top six single-season marks for assists as a Yellow Jacket including a school-record 140 she had as a sophomore. Rarely did anything get past her. The 427 career assists she registered is 180 more than anyone else who has ever played at the school.

Miller has 12 career records to her credit including those for batting average and assists. Other all-time Cedarville marks that belong to her are games played (148), at bats (456), hits (170), doubles (39), triples (16),

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extra base hits (60), runs batted in (101), total bases (256), most times hit by pitch (9), and most defensive chances (673).

Ironically, Miller does not own one single-season school record in any of Cedarville's offensive categories. She simply established herself to be one of the consistently outstanding Yellow Jacket players over the course of four seasons.

"Erika was dedicated to hard work," remarked Yellow Jacket head coach Dave Gaffner. "Although she had a few injuries and bruises throughout the season, they never stopped her from starting and putting forth a 100 percent effort. She exemplified the type of team member that coaches look for. She will be sorely missed."

Miller carried a Comprehensive Physical Education major. She hopes to stay in the Cedarville area, teach elementary physical education, and get into coaching. However, she doesn't plan on forgetting about her collegiate experience.

"The friendships I made at Cedarville and the Christian leadership I was under had a big influence on me," Miller stated. "I will always take that with me."

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