



Former Diamonds player shining bright with Chicago Bandits

Sammy Marshall talks about why the Diamonds mean so much to her

How long did you play for the Diamonds? What age groups were you in and who were your coaches?

I played on the **Diamonds** from when I was 11 to 15 years old. I played on a 12U, 14U and 16U team under Coach Mike Vacik.

What do you remember most about playing with the Naperville Diamonds?

The most memorable thing about playing with the Diamonds are the friendships I made. Some girls that I played with on my original 12U team are still some of my good friends today.

What piece of advice would you give to girls playing fast pitch softball?

Dream as big as you want! With the right work ethic and hard work, you can achieve anything you set your mind to!

What skill do you think has served you best in your softball career?

Definitely my speed. Whether that's stealing bases, getting down the line fast, making plays in the hole at short or being able to take the extra base on a hit, speed has and always will be my best and most prized softball asset.

"I'm incredibly grateful for where I started my softball career. The Naperville Diamonds gave me so many opportunities and skills that ultimately led me to playing professionally now. I honestly believe I wouldn't be in the position I am now if I didn't originally start with the Naperville Diamonds."

Do you have any pregame rituals you go through?

Not so much pregame, but before every at-bat, I do the same routine to get my mind right and I take a deep breath to calm myself before the pitch comes.

What do you like most about playing for the Bandits?

Constantly learning. Even at the age of 22, there is still so much about the sport that I have to learn. I honestly think I could play this sport until I was 100 and I wouldn't know everything there is to know about softball. Being around the best players in the world, I get to learn from the best and hopefully, that'll only make me a better player in the future.

Did you play any other sports growing up? Did they help you become a better softball player?

Before playing softball, I played Little League Baseball. Playing with nothing but boys, it required me to play at the best level all the time because I had to constantly validate my skill set to my boy teammates.

What are some fun things you do with the Bandits when you aren't traveling?

Our favorite thing to do was to go to the Chicago beach on our off days and just relax

What's it like being a pro fast pitch softball player?

The feeling is still surreal to me. I'm unbelievably blessed to be in the situation I am right now and I'm still in disbelief that I get to say I play the sport I love for a living.

What do you do during the off season?

As of now that is still up in the air. I will be doing camps, clinics and lessons as of now and may get another job in the near future.

Did you always think you would be a professional fast pitch softball player?

No. Especially after going to a little mid-major school (WIU), I figured the end of my college career would also be the end of my playing career. After finding out at the beginning of my senior year there was some professional interest, I knew I had a shot. It didn't become official until April 1st when I got drafted just how good of a shot I had, but that day will be one of the best days of my life.



Sammy Marshall when she played for the Naperville Diamonds and (inset) winning the 2015 NPR Championship with the Chicago Bandits.

How can girls follow you on Twitter, Instagram or other social media avenues?

Twitter and Instagram user name: @sammymarshall10

What do you think about playing for your hometown team?

It's an unbelievable feeling getting to wear 'Chicago' across my chest and to look up in the stands every home game and see my parents. I couldn't imagine playing for any other team than the Chicago Bandits and I'm praying it'll be my home for quite some time.

What's been the highlight of your career?

Without a doubt, my highlight came just last week when we beat the Pride and won the National Championship. It was the first championship I've won since high school and it was a moment that I will never forget for the rest of my life.

I'm incredibly grateful for where I started my softball career. The **Naperville Diamonds** gave me so many opportunities and skills that ultimately led me to playing professionally now. I honestly believe I wouldn't be in the position I am now if I didn't originally start with the **Naperville Diamonds**.

As a 12u player, it was clear I was good at softball, but definitely not great and by no means amazing. I realized the player I was and I owned it. I was fast so I worked on my speed. I had good hand-eye coordination, so I worked on my slapping. I had a decent arm so I worked on my range and throws. Every player with the right mindset, work ethic and determination can choose their own destiny.

At an early age, I refused to be anything less than the best. Was I always the best? No. Am I the best now? Not even close, but I will work harder than anyone on that field so that maybe one day I can get close. If there is anything that any little softball player can take away from me, it's that you can achieve any dream you set your mind to if you believe you can do it! I believed that I could be one of the best players in the nation, and by the end of my career, I think I'll be able to say I accomplished that.