

## **Pitching With Pop: Jaci Rahey Remembers Grandfather's Lessons**

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The drop pitch with a little extra spin. The riser that spins backward with some bite. And the specialty drop-curve that cuts in on right-handed batters and tails down.

DePaul senior Jaci Rahey can take out hitters with a number of pitches.

And she owes it all to her maternal grandfather.

Joseph Hundertpfund -- whom she affectionately refers to as "Pop" -- was a windmill pitcher who traveled throughout Southern New Jersey with softball great Eddie Feigner and the famous The King & His Court touring team.

And it was in the Rahey's back yard that "Pop" equipped his granddaughter -- then 4 years old -- with the pitching arsenal that would prove to make her one of the best pitchers in Bergen and Passaic counties.

"We were so close," said Rahey, who also plays volleyball and basketball. "We would go outside for hours and he would just teach me how to throw. He taught me the basics. He's the reason I'm the pitcher I am."

"Pop" passed away when Jaci was in the seventh grade, but his legacy lives on in every out she records.

"I look back at home videos all the time and I see how much I've changed and how much my grandfather has helped me," she said. "It's definitely all him."

Rahey, who can freeze hitters with her elaborate, over-the-head delivery, recorded 13 wins, 181 strikeouts and an 0.83 ERA for the Spartans last season.

"People say [my windup] is intimidating because I'm tall enough as it is," said the 5-foot-11 right-handed pitcher. "[In the circle], I'll think, 'This girl is petrified of me. She's not going to be much of a threat.' "

She's already received a handful of acceptance letters from colleges -- including Manhattan and Caldwell, her top choices -- to play both softball and volleyball.

But for now, the versatile player is focused on one thing only: ending her high school softball career the same way it began. With a County title.

In 2004, the Spartans were named the Passaic County champs over Clifton, after heavy rains and lightning forced umpires to call the final in the sixth inning with DePaul leading, 6-5.

"It was hard not to jump up and down and scream in excitement because the other team was right there with us," Rahey said. "It wasn't a full game -- the way we wanted it to end -- but you had to be happy about winning a County title."

Nothing would be sweeter than another County title -- this time without the controversy.

"I came into DePaul my freshman year, winning a title, and I feel like I should leave DePaul winning a County title," said Rahey, who also won the County championship in volleyball as a freshman. "Everyone wants to come back in 10 years and see that number up on the banner."

At this stage of the game, however, the Spartans says it's too early to look ahead to the postseason. Their motto for this season is simple: One day at a time, one pitch at a time. "Tomorrow is promised to no one, so play hard today," is DePaul coach Sue Parler's new mantra.

But if anyone can lead the Spartans to another County title, it's Rahey, Parler says.

"Jaci is a competitor, and if she has a goal set, there's not going to be much to stand in her way," Parler said. "She's an awesome three-sport athlete and our job is to raise our game to her competitive level."