

The Translation of High School Athletics to Collegiate Softball

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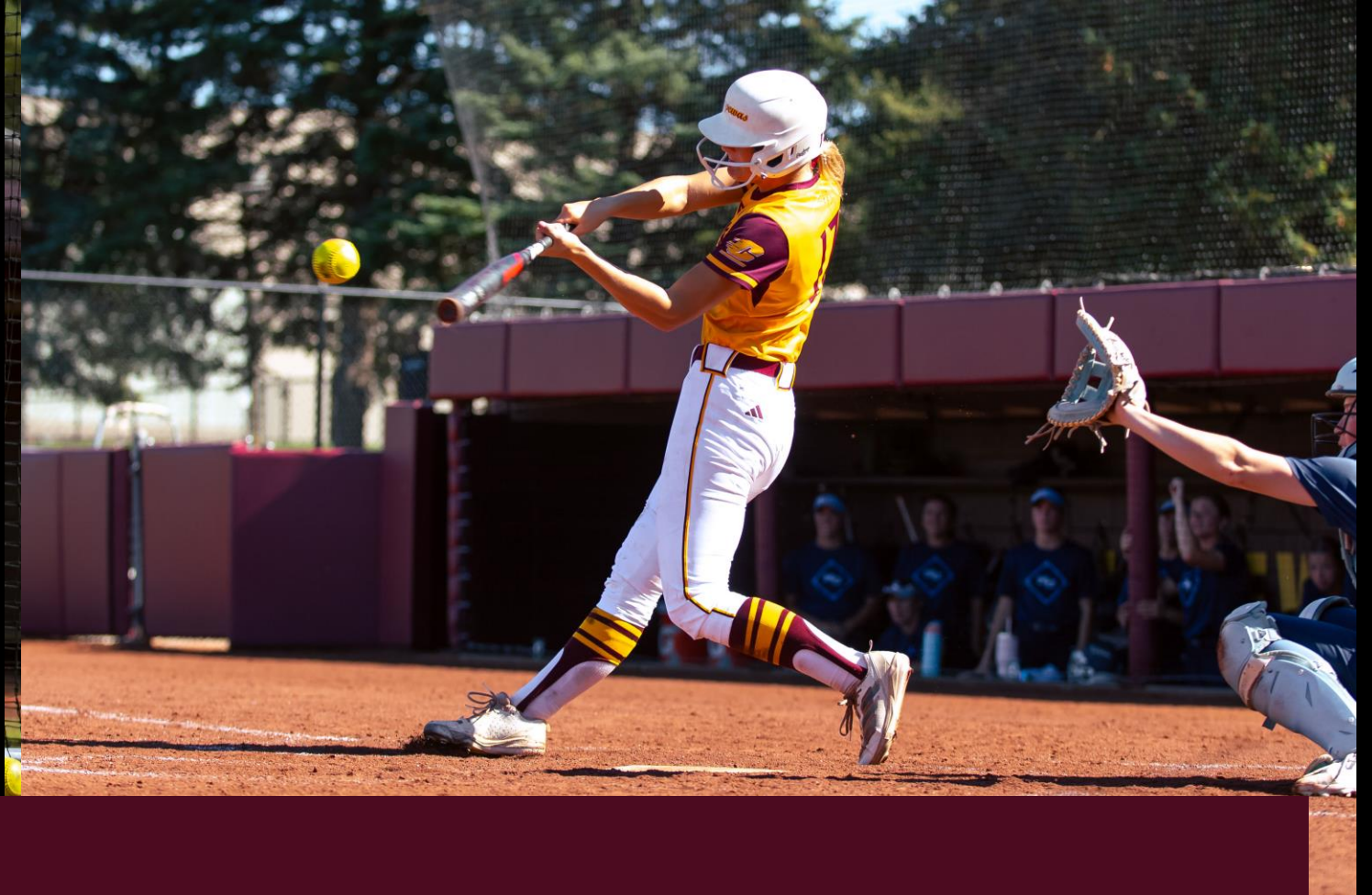


The primary goal of high school athletics is to prepare students for life by developing intangible skills and a sense of community that will be carried with them for the rest of their lives



Skills Obtained from High School Softball

1. Translatable Schedules
2. Softball IQ
3. Goal Setting
4. Servant Leadership
5. Self-Advocacy and Communication
6. Sacrifice
7. Community Representation
8. Areté



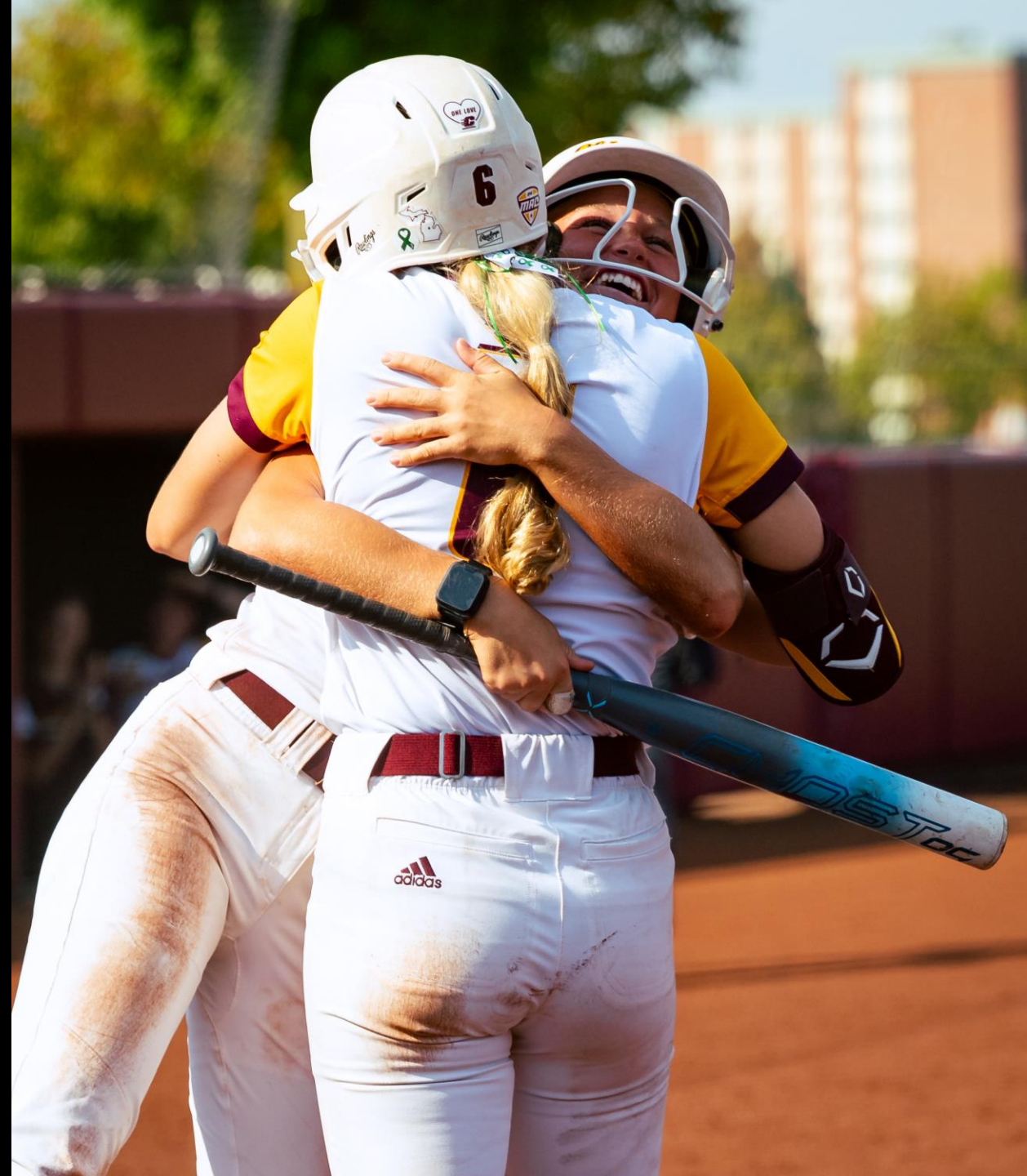
Let's define these skills and how we promote them as coaches.

1. Translatable Schedules

- High school softball better reflects the schedule of collegiate softball, compared to travel ball.
 - Daily practices and games
 - Balancing academics and athletics

How do we promote translatable schedules?

- Establish consistent daily practice routines
 - Consistent practice start times, warm up routines, everydays, clear expectations about practice equipment setup, etc.
 - Send practice plans in advance
- Encourage athletes to prioritize their academics in times of high stress
- Encourage athletes to participate in pre/post practice injury care and prevention



Translatable Schedules – Practice Plan

- CMUSB practice plan example

Translatable Schedules - Everyday

- CMUSB ball everyday for the outfield VIDEO

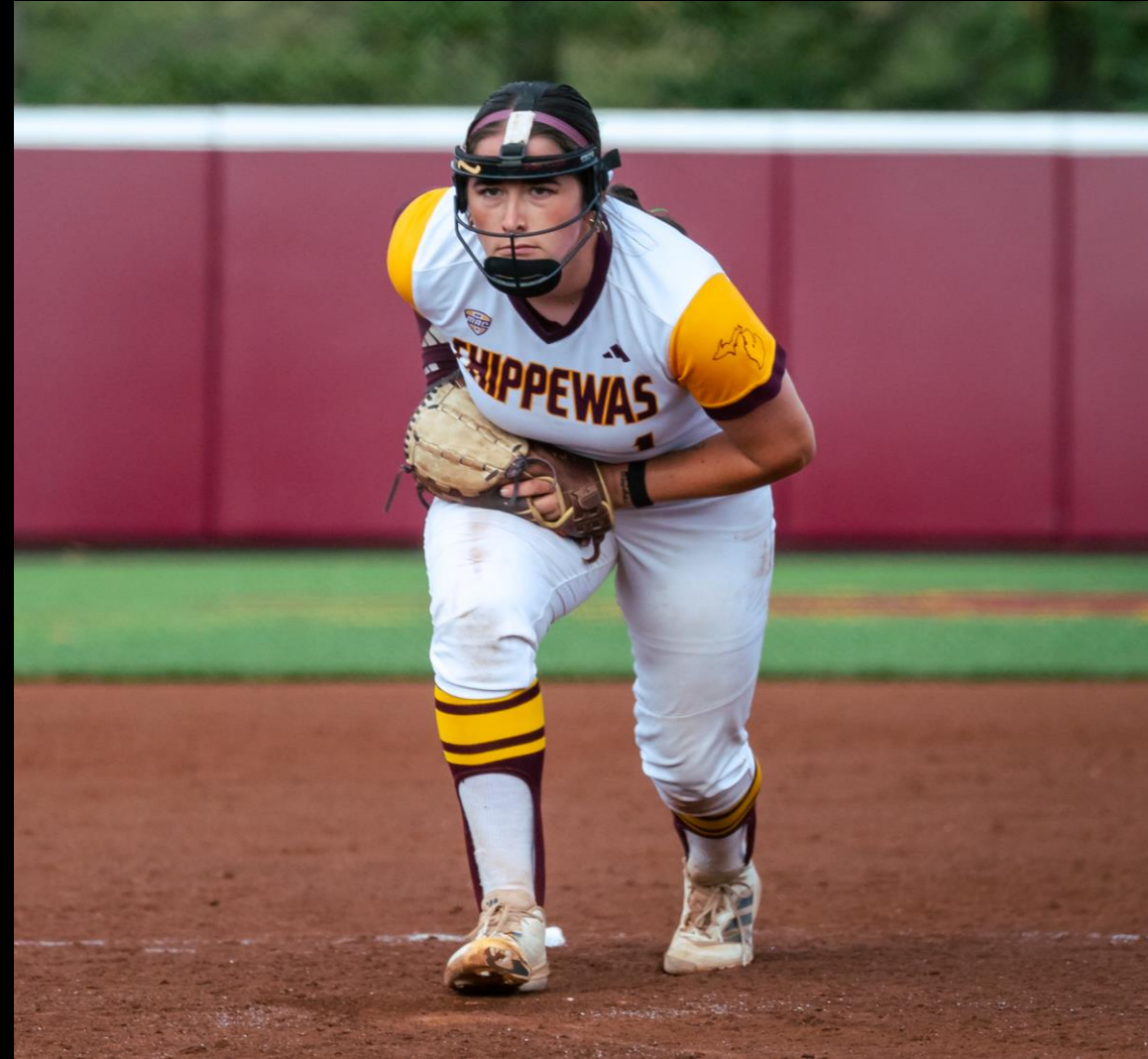
2. Softball IQ

- Complete 7-inning games in high school softball
 - No time limits
- Provides the opportunity to grow a strategic mind during each game



How do we promote the growth of softball IQ?

- Softball school
 - Use whiteboards/other visuals to discuss situational softball decisions
 - Challenge the athletes' brains, instead of the execution of the play itself
- Data tracking during games
 - Provides non-starters with a team-centered purpose
 - Examples include...



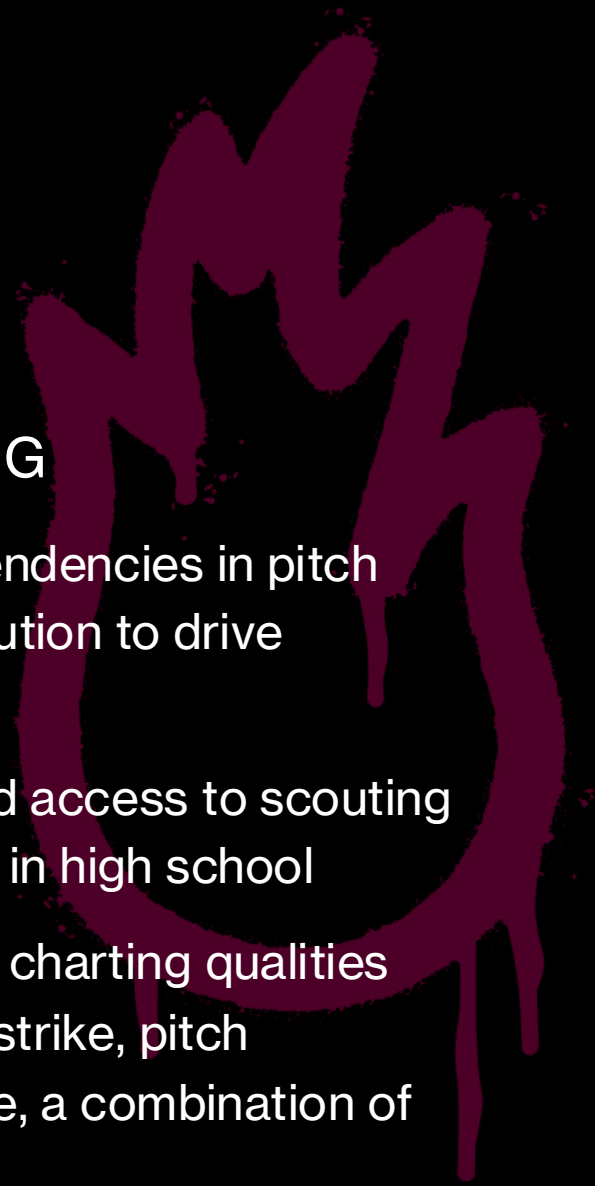
Data Tracking Options

QUALITY AT BATS (QUABS)

- Used to identify and quantify positive offensive production
- Set a goal for number of QUABs to obtain in each game
- QUABs include (but are not limited to) hits, walks, HBPs, hard balls in play, sac bunts, sac flies, balls in play to move runners, balls in play with RBI, ABs with 7+ pitches

PITCH CHARTING

- Used to identify tendencies in pitch calling/pitch execution to drive offensive success
- Helpful with limited access to scouting opposing pitchers in high school
- Examples of pitch charting qualities include first pitch strike, pitch location, pitch type, a combination of these factors, etc



3. Goal Setting

- Long term goals in high school and college softball
 - Conference standings or post season performance
- Process oriented goals
 - Mini goals to accomplish long term goals



How do we promote goal setting?

- Establish team and individual SMART goals at the beginning of season and check in on those goals regularly (both long term and process oriented)
- **S**pecific **M**easurable **A**ttainable **R**ealistic **T**ime-Oriented
- Examples
 - "We will win the *** conference this year" (long term)
 - "We will improve our team batting average from .280 last year to over .300 this year" (long term)
 - "I will get on time off of the machine today at practice" (process)
 - "We will make 5 or less errors during ground ball practice as a team today" (process)
 - "The outfielders will communicate on every ball during this practice/game" (process)

Leadership Styles

- Not limited to but including...
 - **Authoritative Leadership**- players who represent a vocal field general, often holding other players accountable (traditional leadership style)
 - **Leadership by Example**- players who are always doing the right things at the right time without being told to do so or complaining
 - **Steady Presence Leadership**- players with an unwavering consistent temperament, who are often looked to by their teammates in times of high stress
 - **Social Leadership**- players who have a good relationship with all their teammates, who often have significant power to influence the team's attitude and actions
- And most importantly...



4. Servant Leadership

- Players who prioritize the needs of others over one's own personal gain
- The ultimate team first mindset

How do we promote servant leadership?



- Initiate upperclassmen leadership opportunities
 - Leading drills/routines at practice vocally
 - Organizing team bonding activities
 - Helping underclassmen with rides
 - Creating yearly team identity/mantras
- Publicly affirm *all* athletes helping their teammates/coaches/support staff without being asked to do so
 - Affirming behaviors is the best way to get athletes to repeat them

5. Self Advocacy and Communication

- Athletes must learn to have difficult conversations with respectful communication



- Athlete initiated conversations over parents (in most cases)
 - Parents will not be involved in conversations during college

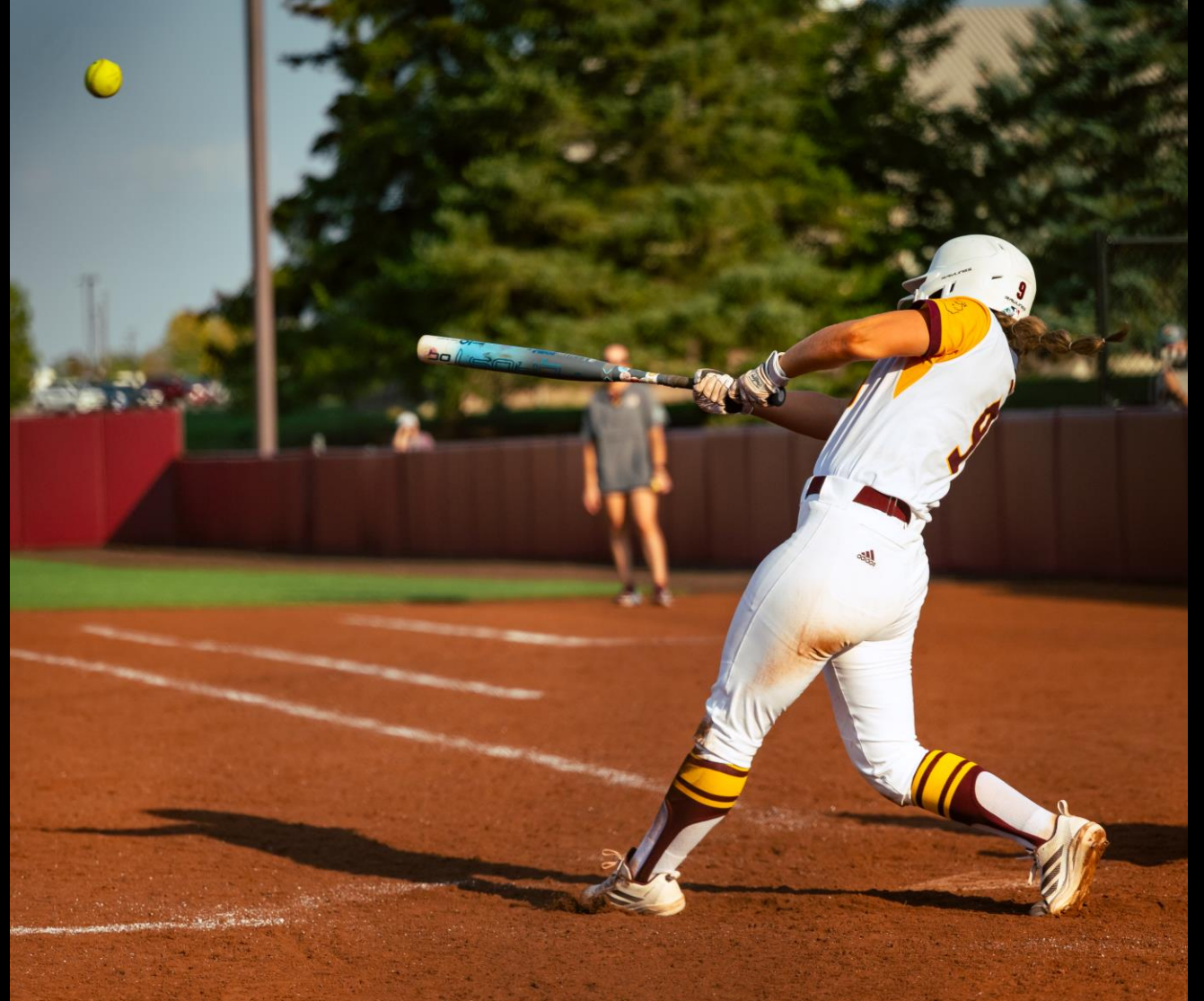
How do we promote self-advocacy and communication?

Establish a communication chain of command

- Problems/questions go to a teammate -> captains/seniors -> assistant coach -> head coach
- Ensures that all problems/questions brought to the head coach are taken in with the upmost sincerity

"Props and Own-It's" after practice

- Post practice opportunity to affirm teammates for their performance/intentions and take accountability for one's own shortcomings
- Not always outcome based
- Encourage athletes to spread the love, instead of "propping up" their best friend or the best athletes every day



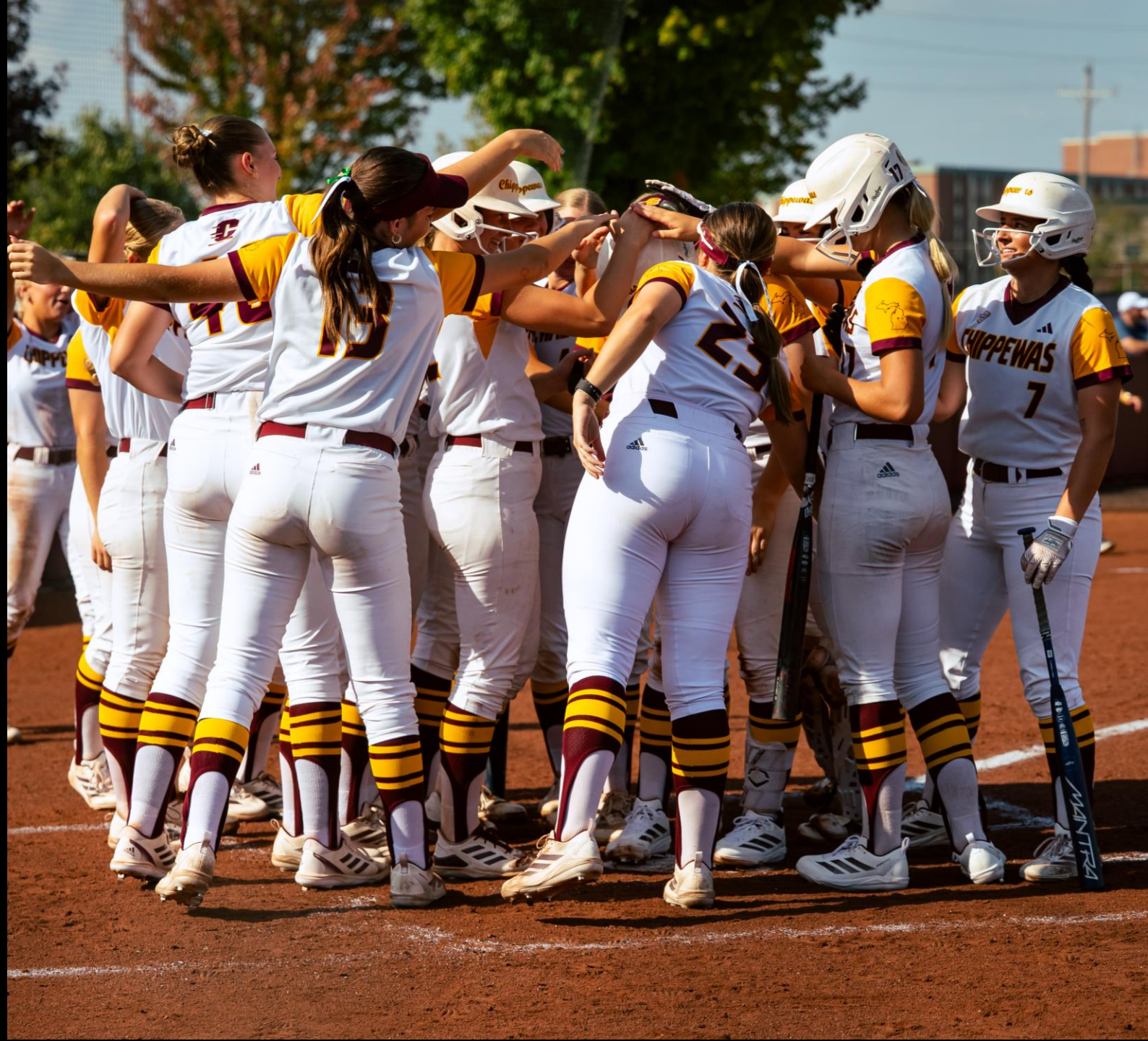
6. Sacrifice

- Never easy, but some level of sacrifice is necessary to succeed as a collegiate athlete and as an adult



How do we promote sacrifice?

- Set boundaries for excused/unexcused absences at practice/games with clear unchanging consequences
- Plan enjoyable practices so athletes are engaged start to finish and look forward to coming to softball practice



7. Community Representation

- High school athletes represent their communities the same way they will be expected to as college athletes
- Play for the front of the jersey





How do we promote community representation?

- Create public social media platforms for your high school softball team that give your community the opportunity to engage with the team and its success
 - Promote special event games like youth night and senior night
- Participate in local fundraising and volunteer work as a team



8. Areté

- Central Michigan softball core value
- Areté is a Greek philosophical concept meaning the fulfillment of one's greatest self
- Each person's areté is unique, and the combination of our uniqueness is what makes a team great

ARETÉ

How do we promote Areté?

- We have Areté printed on the back of our game sweatshirts as a reminder of our core values
- Team activities
 - Role identifying activity
 - Battery percentage activity



Areté - Role Identifying Team Activity

- Have each player individually write down their personal intangible and tangible role for the team, then have each player present these roles to the group
- No wrong answers
 - Embrace each players perceived Arété
- **Intangible examples**
 - "I am a joyous presence at practice with energy for my teammates to feed on."
 - "I will be a strong senior leader willing to answer the questions of any underclassmen."
 - "I will be the loudest cheerleader in the dugout no matter the score!"
- **Tangible examples**
 - "I will be a great leadoff hitter who gets on base as much as possible."
 - "I will be the best understudy, who learns from upperclassmen every day."
 - "I am an excellent role player, who stays ready for the moment my number is called."

Areté - Battery Percentage Team Activity

- This activity is very brief, and can be done in pairs, small groups, or as a team
- A player's battery can vary depending on stress levels, family/social lives, the weather, extracurriculars, school, and more
- Players will identify their battery percentage (0-100%) for that day, with the intent of giving all of what they have for practice
- You cannot give 100% of your battery when you only have 72% left in the tank, but you can give 100% of the 72% you have left

This activity encourages athletes to be the best version of themselves with whatever percentage they have available that day, as opposed to throwing the whole day away on high stress or low energy days.

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