

Waldrop Goes Pro

After four years with FSU, Chester native drafted to Chicago Bandits

BY JOSH MATHEWS

Chester has seen its share of professional athletes. Matoaca had James Farrior, Meadowbrook had Morgan Moses and Brandian Ross currently in the NFL. L.C. Bird has Jason Snelling, Thomas Dale has had four players reach the NFL including William Henderson and Rudi Johnson – but the next athlete to ascend to the pros – look no further than Thomas Dale softball alum Lacey Waldrop, who was drafted as the third pick in the first round of the National Pro Fast pitch (NPF) Softball League draft by the Chicago Bandits.

“I’m really excited to know that I won’t have to hang up my cleats anytime soon,” Waldrop said. “You don’t know if there’s a future for you in sports – it’s amazing to know that my body of work was enough for a team that wanted to draft me.”

The NPF season runs from May through August. Chicago is one of the oldest franchises in the league,

which has added a new team in each of the last two years. Waldrop has visited Chicago twice and said she was excited to explore the big city and to stay there for more than a couple days, and like most, she’s excited for two things.

“I’m excited for the pizza and the shopping,” said Waldrop. “I’m also excited to see some Cubs games and I want to see Jon Lester pitch.”

Before deep dish pizza and Wrigley Field, Waldrop and the Seminoles have work left to do, and Lacey is focused on the task at hand.

In a banner 2014 season, Waldrop won USA Softball National Pitcher of the Year honors as Florida State made an appearance in the College World Series. The pitcher was also a member of the following teams: NFCA All-American First Team, All-Region First Team member, ACC Pitcher of the Year, All-ACC First Team, ACC All-Tournament Team and the All-ACC Aca-

demic Team.

This year, after losing six seniors, the Seminoles have “started to put it all together” in the words of Waldrop and are 31-8 overall with an 11-1 record in the Atlantic Coast Conference. Six of the Seminoles eight losses have come against ranked opponents, but they have also notched seven victories against



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top competition.

“This team for sure is different,” Waldrop said. “We want to replicate going to the college world series and we’ve just started to figure out how to get things going and to really play together.”

Statistically speaking, Waldrop is having a year that’s on par or better than last. The senior is 20-3 with a 1.01 ERA as of press time. In 20 starts, she’s fired five shut outs and struck out 163 batters over 138 innings. Opponents bat just .147 against her.



There’s a month left in the regular season and about a month left until Waldrop graduates. The media major has already landed an internship with Fox Sports South. The ACC Championships are May 7 through May 9 at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va., about three and a half hours from Chester.

Another caveat for Waldrop is teammate Maddie O’Brien was also drafted with the ninth pick by the Pennsylvania Revolution. The left-handed power bat and Waldrop will have to face each other in the professional ranks.

“She’s a left-handed power hitter,” Waldrop said. “That’s a challenge in itself – she’s got a very selective eye and you’ve got to attack the zone with her, she has a lot of power and can make you pay.”

This upcoming weekend, Florida State travels to Louisville for games on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, April 11-13. These games will be televised on ESPN U. For updates on Waldrop and other area college athletes, follow us on twitter @VNewsSports.

From #ShakaWatch to #KennyWatch, will Williams stick with VCU?

BY JOSH MATHEWS

2015’s edition of “Shaka Watch” is over and former VCU Head Coach Shaka Smart took the head coaching post at the University of Texas – Austin. One local impact that the story could potentially have is on L.C. Bird standout Kenny Williams III, who signed with VCU this winter.

Smart has been pursued every off-season since the Rams’ improbable run to the 2011 Final Four. One would think this information might have played a role

in the decision making process for Williams, who built a strong relationship with Smart through the recruiting process. Williams always said that staying close to home was a priority.

Locally, questions began to swirl as soon as the news of Smart’s hiring broke nationally about whether Williams will stay or go and, if he was to de-commit, where he may land.

Williams’ twitter account still says “VCU Basketball Commit” and the young star understandably declined com-

ment at this time.

Several sources via twitter have pointed out that the University of Virginia has a scholarship open for the upcoming year and, for that reason alone, it could be a potential landing spot should Williams go. The Cavaliers spent most of the season ranked in the top five in the nation and were ranked as high as number two. However, one would suppose it would depend on who VCU’s next head coach will be.

WRIC Channel 8’s sport casters Mitch Carr and Chip Brierre said that for-

mer VCU coaches Anthony Grant, Mike Rhoades, and Jeff Caple are candidates, along with Jeremy Ballard, a current assistant. Reports on NBC 12 stated that after a video conference with players, VCU athletic director Ed McLaughlin said that no current players expressed a desire to leave the program.

No matter where Williams land, the community will indubitably support and follow him. From a fan perspective, many locals would love to see him in the black and gold next season.