

Player Profile: Jo Ann Kruger



What team do you play for?

The Baltimore Blues

What is your position?

Shortstop/Catcher

When did you start playing baseball? How long have you played in the EWBC?

With the support of my father, I started playing softball when I was 7 (1982) and continued through college. I then found the EWBC in 1997, playing with the Baltimore Stars. In 2001, I started playing full time with the Blues and the D.C. Thunder.

Why do you like to play baseball?

When I was younger, I enjoyed playing the game because it was something in which I excelled. The thrill of making a great play or winning a game in the bottom of the 9th was always a great feeling. As I grew older, I realized that even though those feelings were still there, the life-long friendships I was building while playing a game that I loved was an even better reward.

What is your favorite baseball memory?

There are so many from which to choose. Here is the first that comes to mind: I started playing catcher and during my first tournament game, I

threw out 2 runners who drifted too far off first, two who got too far off second, and 2 potential base stealers. In the same game, I blocked a ball and could not find it for the life of me. Of course, it was right in front of my feet. The exhilaration of picking off runners, and the laughter that came with realizing where the ball was just helped make the game that much better.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

My father told me, if you get hurt during a play, finish the play then cry. Of course, that was years before the famous, "there is no crying in baseball" quote.

What advice would you give to an aspiring baseball player?

Work hard, listen to your coaches, but most importantly enjoy the game. It is a game, and it is supposed to be fun.

What do you like to do outside of baseball?

I enjoy hiking with my Fiancé Patrick, and German Shepherd Tinsley.

What is your favorite walk-up song?

I always thought using the Indiana Jones theme song would be fun.

Player Profile: Jennifer Francis

What team do you play for?

The Flames

What position do you play?

OF, 1B

When did you start playing baseball, and how long have you played in the EWBC?

I started playing machine pitch when I was eight. I played until seventh grade and switched to fast-pitch softball. I played D-I college softball. Several years later, I found my way back to baseball and have been playing in the EWBC for about four years.

What is your favorite baseball memory?

I was 11 or 12 and the only girl on my baseball team. Down by two with two runners on, I approached the plate. A dad from the other team had led a chorus of hecklers against me and my teammates all game long. Their relentless chatter grew louder after I got behind in the count with two strikes. But I was determined. I wasn't going to miss the next pitch. The pitcher fired the ball. I made contact, and with a thunderous clap, the ball made a speedy one-way trip over the fence. As I rounded the bases, the dad and leader of the hecklers raised his arms and bowed toward me in a "we are not worthy" gesture. The opposing fans stayed fairly quiet after that. For good measure, in my next at bat, I hit a grand slam. There is pure joy in hitting, and I felt it that day. I also carried this valuable lesson: actions speak louder than words!

What is the best advice you ever received?

Learn from the past, look to the future, live in the present.



Francis as a slugging toddler and puppy cuddler.

What ball player (past or present) would you most like to meet?

I would have liked to meet Toni Stone, a multi-sport athlete and baseball extraordinaire. She would have had loads of interesting stories. As a young Black woman in the 1940s and '50s, she faced her fair share of discrimination, but she did not let that deter her. Stone became the first woman to be a regular in a men's professional baseball league. Stone started her professional baseball career in 1946, and in 1953, she signed with the Indianapolis Clowns of the Negro American League. The Clowns needed a second baseman to replace a player who was going to the Milwaukee Braves. That player was none other than Hank Aaron! Stone played with some of the best in the game, and she excelled on the field.

What are songs you like to warm up to?

"Little Bitty Pretty One" by Thurston Harris
"What I Like About You" by The Romantics