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## Attrition in an Elite Level Softball Program

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ATTRITION IN AN ELITE LEVEL SOFTBALL PROGRAM

by

Denise J. Robinson  
Bachelor of Arts, Jamestown College, 1992

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in

partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Science

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1996

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This thesis, submitted by Denise J. Robinson in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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This thesis meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

Harvey Knell  
Dean of Graduate School


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**To Shirley Kowalski, A Teacher of Life.**

## ABSTRACT

There are many reasons individuals enter and sustain involvement in sport. There are also many reasons people drop out of sport, discontinue at a specific intensity level or change sports altogether. Many athletes from a four year elite level softball training program (the Sask First High Performance Program) are not continuing at an elite level after completing the program. The purpose of this study was to identify factors that have contributed to discontinuation based on interviews of continuing and discontinued athletes from the program. All interviews were conducted via telephone. The interviews were taped, transcribed and analyzed by the author, a former Sask First athlete. Interview responses regarding perceptions of burnout, training loads, perceived competence, group cohesion, and personal/situational factors were examined. Athletes were also given the opportunity to provide recommendations to enhance the continuation of participation at an elite level for current and future athletes.

Attrition was evident as twelve of twenty-four athletes are not presently playing at an elite level. Sport transference was apparent as eight of twelve are playing softball at a lower level and six are coaching or instructing softball. Six of twelve are planning to reenter elite softball.

Personal and situational factors such as the location of the competitive team, career, and significant others were cited as reasons for discontinuation. Despite this, most

discontinued players stated they would have continued playing at an elite level if the Sask First team could have stayed together, if elite players could have stayed within close proximity, and if they could have had an elite level coach. Dissatisfaction with opportunities to move to a higher level following Sask First was apparent. Among the players still playing elite softball, the love of the game was cited as the reason for continuing. Most of these players have to travel to play on an elite team. It was also important to them to have an elite level coach following Sask First and it was important to them to continue to play with the Sask First athletes after completion of the program.

In conclusion, no single factor is primarily responsible for ceasing participation at an elite level. Systemic problems in the softball organization such as coaching and teams available following the program have a significant impact on players' decisions to discontinue elite level play. Social exchange theory and the weighing of costs and benefits as well as weighing alternatives appear to have significant merit in this study.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Klint and Weiss (1986 as cited in Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992) and White and Coakley (1986 as cited in Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992) make it clear that children and adolescents participate in a number of different sporting events, ranging from recreational to competitive, from unstructured to highly structured and from developmental to elite levels. Dishman (1986 as cited in Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992) states that it becomes a critical issue for future researchers to monitor the participation patterns of individuals involved in specific programs, in order to document the transitory or permanent nature of the discontinuation process (Dishman, 1986 as cited in Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992).

Studies of athletes who drop out of sport have called into question the meaning of the term "dropout" as an accurate or even appropriate descriptor of individuals who discontinue sport involvement. For example, Klint and Weiss (1986 as cited in Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992) found that 95% of the former competitive gymnasts interviewed were either participating in another sport or were still participating in gymnastics at another level. Similarly, Gould, Feltz, Horn and Weiss (1982) found that 68% of the youth who withdrew from competitive swimming programs were active in other sports and 80% planned to reenter swimming the following year.

White and Coakley (1986 as cited in Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992) found, through extensive interviews, that for most youth, changes in participation patterns and leisure activity priorities were normal and that discontinuation from sport was often a developmentally constructive decision even when it meant doing nothing for a period of time. Such decisions were often made based on a consideration for their future in various roles, concerns and personal competence, and constraints related to money, parents and friends (White & Coakley, 1986 as cited in Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992).

Based on these few studies mostly regarding youth, the phenomenon of discontinuation apparently ranges from being a sport-transfer (e.g., discontinue one sport to try another or the same sport at a different level of competitiveness) to totally withdrawing from sport in general (based on a variety of practical, developmental, or negative reasons) (Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992).

#### Reasons for Attrition

##### Personal and Situational Factors

It has been recognized over the past two decades that the stressors associated with elite performance are quite varied and originate from outside as well as inside the sporting environment. Exercise stress is not the only factor that is excessive in an athlete's life. It is possible that symptoms associated with increased stress may be caused by the accumulated effects of the combination of training and other outside stressors (Koukouris, 1991).

Koukouris (1991) studied Greek athletes and suggests that there may be additional reasons why athletes drop out of competitive athletics. Reasons for discontinuation may

be due to personal or situational factors surrounding the athlete. Possible factors or reasons identified by Koukouris for discontinuation include (but are not limited to): inadequate financial support, time spent fundraising, training was time consuming, problems with coaches, lost interest, career, no time for dating, increasing age, distance was too great, transportation problems, and moved away from the area.

Koukouris (1991) describes disengagement from sport as a process and there is not one particular age an athlete drops out of competitive sport. Although there seems to be a broad range of ages for dropping out, 73.4% of the athletes ceased participation in competitive sport between ages 18 and 23.

Early attrition research by Orlick (1973, 1974 as cited in Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992) sent some shock waves through the sport psychology community. In his interviews with 60 former Canadian sport participants, ranging from seven to eighteen years, Orlick (1974 as cited in Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992) found that the majority of children who indicated that they would not continue their participation the following year cited negative experiences such as lack of playing time, the competition emphasis of the program, and dislike for the coach. Participants under ten years of age reported lack of playing time, and lack of successful experience as reasons for discontinuation. Older children reported conflicts of interest such as other extracurricular activities or responsibilities with work.

### Group Cohesion

Group cohesion appears to have a correlation with sport continuation or discontinuation. Spink (1995) studied the relationship between cohesiveness and adherence by examining the intention of individuals to participate in the future. Spink

studied perceptions of social cohesion, using elite ringette team members. Elite female athletes who indicated that they would return for another season were most likely to perceive the social cohesiveness with their team as high. Spink explains that organized activities such as road trips, fundraising activities, and tournaments readily facilitate closeness and unity within a group as a whole. This contrasts with recreational teams where fewer opportunities exist for group development because organized group activities tend to be less prevalent. This study is particularly important because it focused on elite female athletes in a team setting. Research to date has primarily focused on male athletes.

#### Training Loads and Burnout

Although much attention is paid to competition performance, little in the sport psychology literature focuses on the preparation leading to competitions. Practices and training sessions have always accounted for most of the time a top athlete works at a sport. What has changed, however, is the nature of the training time. At the elite level, in response to increasing rewards for success and increasing pressures on athletes and coaches, there has been a marked increase in the stress of training. In attempts to maximize performance competitions, many athletes and coaches have experimented with increases in the duration and intensity of the training time (McCann, 1995).

Staleness describes the negative results of excessive training stress (Hackney, Pearman, & Nowacki, 1990). Authors have described staleness as the end result of overtraining (Hackney et al., 1990). Where athletes are free to make a sport a full-time commitment, significant increases in training loads and intensity have been attempted. In many cases, these have been at significant cost. Just as undertraining can spell defeat for

athletes, too-high and too-long training loads can negatively affect performance (McCann, 1995). Various authors have also linked excessive training loads to burnout in sport (McCann, 1995).

The topic of burnout in athlete populations was advanced and given theoretical focus by Smith (1986 as cited in McCann, 1995), who proposed a model to explain athlete burnout. Smith emphasizes burnout is a kind of withdrawal and that athletes with burnout syndrome withdraw, either physically or psychologically, from sport participation. Smith also distinguishes between dropping out of sport and burnout; people stop participating in sports for many reasons other than burnout (Smith, 1986 as cited in McCann, 1995).

The concept of burnout became widely known around 1980 (Coakley, 1992). It took a few years before it was used in relation with sport participation, but in the mid-1980s, some people began describing highly talented young athletes who left high performance sport programs in a state of extreme emotional duress as "cases of burnout." Burnout is generally defined as a personal trouble calling for interventions that focus on the character and coping skills of individual athletes facing intense, stress-filled lives of training and competition (Coakley, 1992).

From a conceptual perspective, burnout should be viewed as a process in which one discontinues or curtails involvement in a previously enjoyable competitive sport as a result of excessive chronic stress. Moreover, several different strains of burnout seem to characterize this process, one initiated by physical stress (e.g., excessive training loads) and another by psychological stress (e.g., expectations of others). The most salient



personal characteristics associated with burnout include perfectionism and a perceived orientation shift from "fun" to a highly competitive environment (Gould et al., 1994).

Interventions based on the idea that burnout is caused by chronic, excessive stress seldom involve strategies for changing sport organizations of high performance sport itself. Nor does it call for changes in who controls the conditions of sport participation or the amount of power athletes have over their own lives, in and out of sport. Rather, most interventions are focused on the athlete experiencing the burnout (Coakley, 1992).

Coakley (1992) has a somewhat different perspective and raises questions about the literature on burnout among adolescent athletes, literature in which burnout is often framed as a personal failure to cope with stress associated with high performance participation. According to Coakley's (1992) study of burnout among young elite athletes (males and females 15-19 years of age), burnout is a social phenomenon in which young people leave competitive sport because of two factors: a) a constrained set of life experiences leading to development of a unidimensional self-concept, and, b) power relationships in and around sport that seriously restrict young athletes' control over their lives.

Coakley's information suggests that the young people most likely to experience both conditions are highly accomplished athletes who have been heavily involved in a single sport for a relatively long period of time. Their sport participation involved social experiences that fostered the development of a single identity exclusively related to sport participation and perpetuated a limited set of social relationships directly tied to sport. The people in their lives continuously responded to them in terms of their specialized sport

roles, their time was almost exclusively devoted to the development of specialized skills, and their goals were well defined and tied to assumptions of commitment to long-term specialized sport training (Coakley, 1992).

In Coakley's (1992) study, young athletes became disempowered to the point of realizing that sport participation had become a developmental dead end for them, and that they no longer had meaningful control over important parts of their lives. The pressures experienced by these athletes were generally: a) the sacrifices they had to make to stay involved in their sport at that level, b) they could not do what their peers were doing, and c) they could not try new things. On the one hand, most emphasized how lucky they were to have had the opportunity to develop physical skills and have experiences that none of their age peers had. But, on the other hand, they talked about missing out on the experiences their age peers had experienced.

According to Coakley (1992), the stress during their exits from competitive sport was a symptom of burnout, but not the cause. More accurately, burnout was a process connected to the overall social development of these young people, to the social relations associated with sport participation, and to the social organization of high performance sport itself. Burnout occurred when these young people saw no possibility for claiming and socially constructing desired identities apart from the identity of athlete. Therefore, burnout was grounded in social relations that subverted identity development and precluded the autonomy and independence seriously sought by many young people during adolescence and early adulthood. In summary, athlete burnout occurs: a) when participation in an activity or role constraints forecloses the development of desired

alternative identities, and b) when social worlds of young people are organized in ways that leave them powerless to control events and make decisions about the nature of their experiences and the direction of their own development (Coakley, 1992).

Silva (1990) describes burnout in a somewhat different way. He describes burnout as a physical and emotional exhaustion that often occurs in individuals who have high levels of motivation, impressive goals and a personal commitment to their job, occupation or sport activity. Engagement in any form of competitive athletics from the youth sport level to professional sport requires exposure to physical and psychological training stress. Burnout is distinguished from other phases of the training stress syndrome in that once a person experiences this phase, voluntary or involuntary withdrawal from the imposed stress environment is often inevitable (Silva, 1990). Once an athlete has experienced the extreme physical and psychoemotional distress of burnout the prognosis for reentry into competitive athletics is marginal and the likelihood of reentry and performance at a level approaching presyndrome levels is unlikely (Silva, 1990).

Gould, Tuffey and Udrey (1994) studied burnout in competitive junior tennis players. The purpose of the study was a) to compare the psychological characteristics of junior elite tennis player burnouts, b) to compare the athletes to similar "control" players who did not burn out, and c) to gain a deeper understanding of tennis burnout by interviewing the athletes.

Gould, Tuffey and Udrey (1994) organized results around four primary areas: participants' perceptions of why they discontinued their tennis involvement, the signs and symptoms associated with tennis burnout, training loads, and recommendations for

avoiding burning out and how to cope with the demands of competitive tennis. Some major reasons identified for why players discontinued tennis involvement were situational factors such as competitive pressures to win, overt and subtle parental pressure, time pressures, and the desire to develop a social life outside of sport.

Gould, Tuffey and Udrey (1994) also found that, compared to control players, the burned out athletes had less input into their training schedule; played "up" in age categories more often; were more likely to play on their high school team; exhibited higher motivational scores; psychologically withdrew more; and practiced fewer days. Burned out players also differed from controls on a variety of perfectionism subscales that included: higher on perceived parental criticism; higher on need for organization; higher on concern for mistakes; and lower on planning; and lower on positive reinterpretation and growth coping skills. It was noted that situational factors alone were not responsible for players' burnout. Thus, an interactional model of burnout was supported.

From a theoretical perspective, the views of Smith (1986 as cited in Gould, 1994) and Coakley (1992) seem to have the most merit and investigators are encouraged to continue to examine elements of these two approaches (Gould et al., 1994). Silva's (1990) model was also found to have some merit by Gould et al., but most of the tennis burnouts studied in this investigation were not found to burnout due to excessive training volumes. Instead, psychological stress caused by performance expectations and travel and time demands lead to burned out feelings. In addition, because partial support was found for Smith's (1986), Coakley's (1992), and Silva's (1990) models of burnout, it is suggested

that future research needs to integrate elements of each of these models (Gould et al., 1994)

### Retirement

Discussion about ex-athletes usually emphasizes retirement as a negative event and describes athletes as unwilling victims of circumstance. Loss of economic status, identity crisis, and the loss of meaningful social support from friends and fans are aspects used to describe the retired athletes' circumstances (Coakley, 1983). Although research is scarce, the studies completed on former interscholastic and amateur athletes suggests that their "retirement" from sport is simply seen as a part of normal development such as leaving school, entering college or the labor force, and settling down into new relationships associated with family and career (Coakley, 1983).

It should be remembered that retirement from competitive interscholastic sport does not necessarily entail an end to sport involvement. As well, rather than an ending, Coakley (1983) suggests that retirement should be conceptualized as a "rebirth." Many former high school athletes participate in community-based programs at a variety of competitive levels. They may go on to college and participate in varsity, intramural, or club sports. They may also continue their attachment to sport by majoring in physical education, by coaching or refereeing youth teams, or by becoming involved in any number of lifetime sport activities (Coakley, 1983). Nonetheless, it has been noted that retirement can encompass a wide variety of issues (Ogilvie & Taylor, 1993).

### Social Exchange Theory and Attrition

One theoretical approach to participation motivation and discontinuation motives that has been advocated is social exchange theory (Thibault & Kelley, 1959 as cited in Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992). The basic premise of social exchange theory is that social behavior is motivated by the desire to maximize positive experiences and minimize negative experiences. Individuals will remain in relationships or activities as long as the outcome is favorable. Furthermore, this favorability is considered to be a function of costs and benefits. The decision to remain involved in a current situation is not merely a function of benefits and costs but also includes two levels of satisfaction: satisfaction with the current activity and satisfaction with alternative activities. Thus, an individual weighs the costs, benefits, and satisfaction of a current situation with those alternative situations and makes a decision accordingly (Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992). The weight of costs, benefits, and alternatives are all unique to each individual.

The social exchange theory suggests that athletes can possibly weigh the costs and benefits of participating at an elite level. For instance, sacrifices athletes have to make to compete at a high level (costs) may or may not outweigh the desire to continue to compete (benefit). Some athletes may be willing to sustain certain levels of dissatisfaction in systemic organization (cost) to continue to play at an elite level (benefit). Social exchange theory suggests that an athlete weighs not only the cost and benefits of continuing to play at an elite level, but also takes into account the weight of alternatives. Factors in and out of sport can weigh in this equation. Factors such as personal and situational aspects, group cohesion and/or social aspects of sport, and training time and

demands can be considered in an athlete's decision to continue or discontinue elite level sport participation.

To date, only Petlichkoff (1988 as cited in Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992) included a cost-benefit analysis in an examination of predictors of sport persistence among athletes. She found that starters had higher levels of satisfaction than did survivors (nonstarters), dropouts, or cuttees and that survivors had lower level of satisfaction than did dropouts. Perhaps those who were motivated to "hang on" despite the minimal likelihood of being able to play in games were willing to put up with higher levels of dissatisfaction than those who dropped out. Being on a team may have been a major benefit which was not outweighed by the cost of low perceptions of ability based on lack of playing time (Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992).

#### Statement of Problem

A concern has been raised regarding attrition of athletes from softball following the Sask First high performance training program which develops Saskatchewan athletes for the Canada Games. Development of these athletes and participation in the Canada Games provides the skill level and exposure needed to be identified as National Team prospects. The athletes who have been chosen to the Sask First team generally do not quit the program, but are required to leave at age 19. The elite softball player is said to be in her prime at approximately age 25, but many athletes from this program retire from elite softball well before this age. Elite level softball is defined in this study as "A" level softball, competing at a Provincial/National "A" level.

The question raised is, why are elite softball athletes who are trained over a four-year span not continuing with elite level competition after the training program has been completed? These athletes may not be directly a dropout/retiree from the sport of softball, but rather a dropout/retiree from elite level participation in softball at some point after the Sask First training program. (For additional information on the Sask First program see Appendix A.)

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand reasons for attrition from and continuance in elite softball after completion of an elite preparation program. The study attempted to determine whether or not the occurrence of attrition is greater for the starters or nonstarters of the program. This study also examined to what degree: a) sport transference, b) training loads and burnout, c) personal and situational factors, and d) group cohesion affect continuation or discontinuation of elite level participation in relation with the social exchange theory. Finally, this study solicited recommendations to enhance the continuation of participation at an elite level for current and future Sask First athletes.



## CHAPTER 2

### METHOD

#### Participants

Participants in this investigation were 24 former Sask First softball players from the 1989 and 1993 teams. The response rate for this study was 82.75% (24/29 possible participants). Twelve out of the 24 players interviewed are not presently playing softball at an elite level. Six of 12 discontinued elite level softball players discontinued immediately after the Canada Games (four of these six were starters for Sask First). Nine of the 12 athletes presently playing elite level softball were starters for Sask First. The average discontinued player was 19.9 years of age when she discontinued elite level softball participation. Examination of Table 1 shows ages of the athletes when entered various levels of softball. Ages varied for players entering elite (Provincial "A") level softball. Two people said they started Sask First after age 17, but the remaining players were in Sask First by age 17. The average age of entering Sask First was 15.4 years for discontinued players and 14.6 years for players who have continued at an elite level.

Eleven of the 12 discontinued players played other sports while training for Sask First. The number of sports ranged from two to twelve and the levels of participation ranged from high school to city, college and provincial levels. All 12 players presently playing elite softball participated in other sports while training for Sask First. The number

of sports ranged from three to eight sports and levels of participation also ranged from high school to city, college and provincial levels.

The average age of the discontinued athletes at the time they were interviewed was 23.25 years. The average age of continuing players was 21.5 years.

Table 1. Ages of Players' Entrance in Various Levels of Softball

<u>Players and Levels</u>	<u>Ages 4-7</u>	<u>Ages 8-10</u>	<u>Ages 11-13</u>	<u>Ages 14-16</u>	<u>Ages 17-19</u>
Discontinued Entered Organized Softball	7	5	0	0	0
Continuing Entered Organized Softball	4	6	1	1	0
Discontinued Entered Elite Level Softball	0	1	7	2	2
Continued Entered Elite Level Softball*	0	0	4	5	2
Discontinued Entered Sask First	0	0	0	10	2
Continued Entered Sask First	0	0	3	9	0

\*One player was unsure when entered elite level softball.

#### Instrument

The interview instrument was a questionnaire that integrated elements from previous literature (see Appendix B). The survey included general demographic questions for both discontinued and continued players. The questions included their present age,

perceptions of the training process, whether the Sask First experience was positive or negative, and whether or not they were presently competing at an elite level of softball. Questions regarding perceptions of burnout, training loads, and personal/situational factors as contributing to discontinuation were included for those who had discontinued elite softball. For the athletes still playing at an elite level, the survey focused on the factors that have influenced their decisions to continue to play at an elite level. Also, all athletes interviewed were given the opportunity to give additional information if they so desired. At the conclusion of the interview all athletes were also given the opportunity to provide recommendations for the Sask First program and/or the sport governing body, Sask Sport.

#### Procedure

I made initial contact with the athletes through a letter explaining my intentions and the specific rights they were entitled to as possible participants of the study (see Appendix C). Subjects were interviewed by telephone, and interviews were tape recorded. The average length of the interviews was 45 minutes. I conducted, transcribed, and analyzed all interviews.

It was emphasized in the interviews data would remain completely confidential, and that the presentation of study results would focus on group data. I also indicated that when selected quotes from the interviews would be used to illustrate important details, these would be strictly anonymous, and that I would ensure that their identity was protected. The subjects understood that their participation was entirely voluntary, and they were free to refuse to answer any question or to stop the interview at any point. No questions were refused. Results of this study will be shared with the Sask First high

performance program. Complete transcripts are provided in Appendix D, although pseudonyms are used.

### Analysis

I conducted all transcript analyses. These analyses were conducted with standard qualitative techniques. Specifically, data were first grouped on the basis of continued elite level participation or discontinued elite athlete participation. Responses were color coded by question and compared within the group and between groups. Themes reflecting previous research were sought as well as themes that emerged independent of previous research.

Data analysis was used to establish patterns or regularities as well as differences among the participants. I added notes and wrote analytical comments on the questionnaires when interviewing the athletes by telephone. After transcribing the interviews, these notes were attached to the data. Following the completion of all interviews, I began to examine the emergence of patterns and themes. I began coding by color the lines or phrases related to the literature as well as the emergence of irregularities. Patterns were coordinated together and recorded on a single piece of paper, accompanied by pertinent quotes. I searched for further relationships and grouped these under common categories and organized into themes.

As previously indicated, I am a former Sask First athlete who would be classified as a discontinued elite level softball player. I would also be considered a sport transfer, as I am involved in the sport as a coach. Although I made every effort to avoid allowing my own experiences and knowledge of the situation to enter the analytic process, it should be

acknowledged that such potential exists. Although the risk was minimized by the structure of the survey, my understanding of softball in Saskatchewan and having gone through the Sask First program may have lead to interpretation inferences. Triangulation was used in this study to increase the confidence in the research findings. My advisor, Charlotte Humphries, read the transcripts and confirmed the themes.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

Many themes emerged in the analysis of interview transcripts. These themes will be addressed under appropriate headings and subheadings within the results. Specifically, themes discussed include: a) sport transference, b) contrasting starters and nonstarters, c) the Sask First experience, d) training loads and burnout, e) injury, f) group cohesion, g) Sask First as family, h) elite level coaching, and i) recommendations.

#### Sport Transference

There was evidence of sport transference among the discontinued players. None of the 24 subjects had completely quit participating in sport. Eight of 12 players are playing softball at a lower level. Some of these athletes are in the sport in some other capacity. One is a softball coach, five are instructors at softball camps and clinics. Many of these athletes have stayed in the general field of sport as 10 of the 24 athletes interviewed are in physical education or a related field of study. Many discontinued elite level softball players in this study did not drop out of sport completely, as eight of the 12 have played other sports at various levels since Sask First.

Six discontinued players stated they plan to reenter softball at an elite level at some point in the future, but gave no indication of action plans. Ten players presently playing have played only "A" (elite) level softball since Sask First. One player took one year off

due to injury, and two players discontinued elite level participation for one year and then returned.

Six players presently playing elite softball stated they will continue to play elite level softball "For a couple years." Four out of 12 stated "One more year, maybe more," depending on other factors such as job, marriage, family. One player stated she will play until she wins a major championship, and one player stated she will play for another five or six years.

*Continuation of elite level participation*

*Why the discontinued players reported that being a starter or nonstarter had*

bearing on her decision to discontinue at an elite level. It was being a nonstarter for summer softball that had a bearing on her discontinuation.

That was a factor, because I was no longer a starter (for summer softball) and that was an adjustment. But near the end I wasn't happy and I didn't want to be there (in summer softball). But I think initially

*bothered me*

*A difference between the discontinued players and the players presently playing*

*elite softball was found when five out of 12 players presently playing reported that being a*

starter or nonstarter for Sask First had a bearing on their decision to continue at an elite level. However, there was not a common reason regarding being a starter or nonstarter for continuation. For example, one starter had this to say:

Yes. Because it gave me confidence, if the coaches felt I could play, you know, start. If I was good enough to start and play for them to help out the team to win, it gave me confidence to go on and play.

In contrast, a player presently playing who did not start for Sask First had this to say regarding being a nonstarter for Sask First and its bearing on her continuation to play:

I think I only played one and a half games at the Canada Games, so I really wasn't sure if I was at that caliber. Though, after it was just a matter of saying 'Just because I wasn't a starter, doesn't mean I couldn't have been,' it was just different circumstances.

Six of the 12 discontinued athletes had been starters for the Sask First team. Nine continuing players had been starters for Sask First. All twenty-four athletes interviewed felt they were capable of competing at an elite level following their participation in the Sask First program.

#### The Sask First Experience

All 24 athletes interviewed stated they would want their daughters to be a part of the Sask First program. All 12 players presently playing elite softball stated their participation in the Sask First program was positive. Eight discontinued players stated their participation in Sask First was positive, another two stated it was mostly positive, and two stated their participation was mixed. None of the athletes identified their experience as indifferent or negative.

Nineteen of the 24 athletes interviewed stated they felt the present age (13-19 years) of the Sask First athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball.



Positive factors excerpted from the athletes' interviews regarding the Sask First program were: Sask First gave them the opportunity to train and develop physical and mental skills, opportunity to travel and meet people, access to quality coaching and quality players, it taught "life" skills, developed confidence, taught dedication and discipline, and gave the opportunity to compete at a high level.

A discontinued player stated this about her Sask First experience:

I could go on forever. Looking back, that was probably the best times of my life. And not only as far as training went, but friendships and things like that. I had a really positive experience in the program.

A player presently playing elite softball stated this about her experience in the Sask First program:

It was more than softball. You learned a lot about yourself, the mental aspects of the game. You learned about what being a team member was all about. The level of coaching was outstanding, and I don't feel I have had coaching like that since. It was a wonderful program and it gave me so much experience with the game and with people that it was fantastic.

And finally, a player who is presently playing elite level softball sums up this way:

I think, we spent four years, granted we learned a lot about ball, but now when I look back on it, we learned a lot of life skills. I think that if you went through those four years and all you got out of it was ball skills, then it was a waste of time. You play ball 'x' number of years, these are skills

that, personal skills, interpersonal skills, they can be used for the rest of your life. That's what you get from it besides ball skills.

#### Training Loads and Burnout

The average number of hours spent training for Sask First among the discontinued players was 10.8 hours per week. The hours ranged among this group from 2.5 hours per week to 20 hours per week for some of these athletes. The average number of hours players presently playing elite softball spent training for Sask First was 11.7 hours per week. Athletes' training time ranged from four hours per week to 25 hours per week among this group. Both groups of athletes found the training to be "not easy, but not stressful." Twenty athletes stated they had enough input in their training, and 22 thought the training programs that were sent out by the head coach were a good set-up.

Yah, like if we wanted to switch things we could. Like it was set out for us, but, like we had an aerobic program we could do something else besides run for that. So, I think it was a fairly good set up.

A number of players stated that they missed out on a lot of their high school experiences, but did not regret their participation in the Sask First program. Although there was substantial training and many weekends were spent traveling, generally these athletes were not subjected to the excessive training loads described by athletes citing burnout in previous literature (e.g., Gould et al., 1994). The time spent traveling, training, participating in other sports, and studying did, nonetheless, add up. As noted in Chapter Two, twenty-three of the athletes had participated in other sports while in the Sask First program.

Twenty-one of the athletes interviewed stated that parents, family and friends supported them through their training. All but one had family support; she describes her parents and family as neutral. All of the athletes said that they had enough time for academics, family and friends during their participation in the Sask First program, but there was a noticeable change in the amount of time they could spend with their friends. Time to spend with their friends would primarily be on weekends, but as training increased more weekends were monopolized with camps. Friends are an important part of young adults' lives, and the following players had this to say about it and the time constraints on their social lives:

I'd say enough time, a fair amount of time. I didn't have a lot of time for friends and going out. But for school, I always had time for school. And family, I always had enough time for family. But I didn't have a lot of time going out with friends very much. It was O.K., you make a lot of friends on the Sask First team anyway, so they kind of become your friends anyway. I have no regrets.

One player had this to say:

I think I had just enough time to do all of those things plus softball. I mean, some weekends you were gone, and it was a bummer, but that really wasn't the end of the world. I had a lot of friends on the team, so it didn't matter.

In contrast, one player stated this:

Not much. I suppose I just focused on school and training. We spent a lot of time on the road traveling between places to train on weekends, so I was never really doing things with friends or family or stuff in the summer at all. I don't regret it, but I wished we would've had more fun at it.

Twenty-two players stated they were satisfied with their life outside of softball.

One discontinued player stated this:

Yah. I think when I was playing ball my outside life was better.

Softball was an ego boost. If I knew I could do it there, I know I could make it in college, in life in general. And when the softball program was over, my life fell apart. It was a part of me. And now that's gone. That was my family.

Players were provided with a number of statements about their potential feelings following the Canada Games (see Table 2) and asked to indicate which reflected their feelings. Examination of this table indicates that most players agreed with more than one statement. Discontinued players appeared to endorse substantially more statements reflecting negative feelings (e.g., burnout). Continuing players tend to endorse more positive feeling statements (e.g., positive about continuing). Interestingly, six of twelve continued players did indicate uncertainty about continuing.

When asked if there were additional descriptors of how they felt after completing their training and completion of the Canada Games, both the discontinued and presently playing players had similar responses. Feeling lost, regret over losing, being disappointed, empty (not knowing what to do now that Sask First was over), relief, a sense of loss of

Table 2. Number of Players Agreeing With Statements About Feelings After The Canada Games.\*

Did You Feel...	Discontinued Players	Continued Players
Positive About Continuing at an Elite Level	3	8
Ready to Prepare for National Team Opportunities	0	2
Burned Out or "Stale"	7	3
Ready to Try Something Else	5	2
Ready to Get on With Your Life	4	4
Uncertain About the Future of Your Participation	2	6

\*Players could agree with one, many or none of the responses.

family, and uncertainty were common among the responses. Dissapointment appeared to be due to the teams' finishes at the Canada Games. Although the 1989 team finished fourth and the 1993 team finished second, the teams goal of first place was not reached. Uncertainty was related to not knowing where to play, rather than whether they actually would play. The following player's comments sum up this thought:

I was uncertain about the future of my participation. Not in terms of playing ball and stuff, but I didn't know where to go with it. I think because, playing Sask First, that was the highlight of my career, and you go back to your club team and there is no more Sask First. Nobody is there to win for the same reasons you are there, and the same reasons everyone was

there for Sask First. And that was frustrating. The coaching is totally different. Especially the first year after, it was awful. We kind of struck out in terms of a coach that year. So that was really frustrating. And, I honestly remember (the Sask First coach) saying that I was young enough for the Jr. National Team, but I honestly didn't think about it seriously. I felt I had reached my peak in ball, like, what do I do now?

When asked how their health and energy levels were after the Canada Games, 20 of 24 athletes responded that they felt good, fine or very high. When asked how they felt physically after the Canada Games, 19 of 24 athletes felt good, very good or in great shape. However, when asked how they felt mentally after the Canada Games, 17 of 24 players felt disappointed, deflated, burned out/drained, tired, frustrated or depressed or empty.

The discontinued athletes interviewed were given seven possible responses to the question "Have the following factors contributed to the discontinuation of elite level softball?" The athletes could choose as many responses as pertained to them. Location of the competitive team was selected the most frequently (eight of the 12 discontinued players). Less frequently chosen alternatives were career opportunities (six), money issues (four), fun or lack of fun (three), school (two), and age (two). No subjects cited doing fundraising as a factor for discontinuation.

Nine discontinued players stated they would have continued playing at an elite level if elite players could stay within close proximity. Seven discontinued players stated there was not an elite team available to them immediately after the completion of the Sask

First program. Eight discontinued players stated there is not presently a team available to them (they would have to travel to a team to play elite level softball). Nine players presently playing elite level softball have to travel to a team to play elite level softball. Most of the players cited "the love of the game and competition" as their motivation to travel to play elite level softball.

#### Age Factors

When asked what they thought of lowering the age for beginning Sask First to twelve, seventeen (eight continuing and nine discontinued) noted developmental concerns with such a change. Some supported or did not oppose such a change; they simply noted that the program would need to adjust for younger players or commented that they probably would not have made it themselves at age twelve. Subjects had difficulty interpreting a question about the impact of raising the entrance age to twenty. Their answers were not all comparable, but a large number saw that as conflicting with adult responsibilities that were not factors for teens.

#### Injury Factors

Although the very nature of the sport of softball lends itself to injury, only two discontinued players reported that injury kept them from competing at an elite level. Injury factors, therefore, did not have a significant impact on most of the players' discontinuation of elite level softball.

#### Group Cohesion

Despite citing personal/situational factors such as location of the competitive team, career, significant others, etc. as contributing to their discontinuation, 10 discontinued

players stated they would have continued playing elite level softball if the Sask First team could have stayed together. Five of the six players who discontinued immediately after the Canada Games stated they would have continued playing if the Sask First team could have stayed together as well. Eight players presently playing stated it would have been important to them to continue with the Sask First athletes following completion of the program. The following statements describe this scenario:

When I tried for 1 year without the Sask First team it was a totally different experience which I didn't enjoy. When you are with the same people, with the same coaches for years, I don't know, like it's comfortable for you. Because it was such a positive experience, moving to a different team where I didn't know my role, I don't know the coaching techniques, and just different people. I found it clique at the Sr. Women's level. And my role changed from starter to nonstarter. There was just so many changes that it was a negative experience for me.

One player stated this:

It was very important. It was like family, it was our team and that was it. You train with people for that long and you feel you get to know them. I don't know, it was very important for me. I had also taken some time off club ball (for Sask First) and I didn't know where I belonged in club ball. Because the people that weren't on the Sask First team, there was a bit of segregation on the team the year after the Canada Games.



### Sask First as Family

An overwhelming theme among the athletes interviewed was the feeling that the Sask First team was a "family" and the teammates regarded as friends. Continuing on this team was not an option after the program ended, but continuing at an elite level was. Discontinued players and players presently playing felt they had a very close relationship with the team. When the program ended, they shared a feeling of being "lost," "empty," and "sad" that the players would be going in separate directions at the conclusion of the program.

...we became a family. You knew one another inside and out, you knew when one was going to have a crabby day, you just knew one another. It was very much a family.

One discontinued player had this to say about the Sask First team:

I was also a little sad, cause I knew, I had made some good friends, and we were all going to part ways. So that was kind of disappointing. I also look back on it as being kind of a fun time.

One player presently playing had this to say about leaving the Sask First program:

...definitely disappointed in that I figured I would never have the chance to play together again as a team, all at once.

The players presently playing elite softball have continued to play with, for the most part, players other than Sask First players. When asked how they felt about playing with other players, all of the players stated that it took some getting used to (especially the feeling that these players are just out there to have fun), but it did not bother them. Most

of the discontinued players who had played for a time after Sask First shared similar feelings with the players presently playing regarding playing with non-Sask First players. The one difference was that the discontinued players felt it was too difficult to adapt to this type of environment to continue. One player presently playing stated the following:

I don't have a problem with it. Being from the Sask First program, there is a noticeable difference between, especially, after 1989 there's definitely a difference between Sask First players and other players. And I don't know which is better. I think the Sask First players had more dedication, commitment, and that sort of thing. But you have to understand that the club team never committed what the Sask First players did, and they are out there to have fun, hey all work hard. They may not do as much away from the ball park as the Sask First players do.

One player relates her feelings in the following way:

I've done it and up until this year, it was in some ways very tough because they did not know what it took to be an elite athlete, I didn't feel. It was frustrating seeing them drinking before tournaments and stuff. And the practices weren't as intense. And it was very frustrating at times.

A discontinued player discussed her feelings the following way:

The only thing that is stopping me now (from playing) is that it is hard to play on teams that are below an elite level. It is too hard, I get too frustrated. I get angry that they don't know what they are doing.

Discontinued players (and some continuing players) expressed dissatisfaction with the lower expectations of 'A' softball, and had difficulty adjusting. Sask First is a developmental program implemented to prepare these athletes for the next level of softball. The purpose of Sask First revolves around training dedication, high intensity commitment, and skill development. Sask First athletes had high standards for elite training and competition. Although elite programs should be a progression, it is felt by the athletes that it is not. Entering the elite programs, which serve a different purpose, is the foundation for dissatisfaction.

#### Elite Level Coaching

Nine discontinued players stated they would have continued playing elite level softball if they could have continued with an elite level coach after Sask First. (Four out of the six players who discontinued immediately after Sask First stated they would have continued if they could have an elite level coach to play for after Sask First). Eleven players presently playing stated that it was important to them to have an elite level coach to play for after Sask First. An overwhelming number of athletes stated that the coaching in the Sask First program was outstanding, and the players had learned a tremendous amount about skills, strategy, etc. After the Sask First program, the players felt that they were no longer being taught aspects of the game.

It would've made a big difference. It was important. We had got accustomed to having someone who knew so much about the game. Like a few individuals that knew about the game, that taught us so much, that leaving the program, it was a let down. It was hard to play for those who

didn't know as much as the coaches from the Sask First program. It would've made a big difference of where I played in the Province. I definitely would go to a team that had a coach at that level.

Another player had this statement about elite level coaching after the Sask First program:

It was important, but it didn't happen. I would've liked for it to happen. I think, in that aspect, we would have had more player come back. If we would've had better coaching.

Despite citing that it was important to have elite level coaching following the Sask First program, only nine of the 24 players stated that it was important to them to continue with the same coaches following the completion of the program.

Not that important, it is just we need a high level coach for that high level ball. It wasn't THE coaches that would've kept me in, I just think it was the LEVEL of coaches that would've kept me in.

One player discussed playing on an elite level softball team after playing on Sask First in this way:

I'm still playing Provincial 'A' ball, but I hate it. It is different than Sask First. I didn't like the players (in 'A') or the coaches. They are just different. It is like a bad relationship -- you keep hoping it will be better, so you keep going back each year -- and each year it is the same thing.

One discontinued player summed up her feelings this way:

The only thing I would like to say, from my Sask First experience, I think it was excellent. And because I was a Sask First player, I wish I could still be playing. If I could find the right team or league or situation. But that really isn't an option right now. Right now, I think I see for me staying in competitive softball would be on the coaching side. I would love to continue to play, but for me to play with a bunch of yahoos is a waste of my time.

#### Recommendations of the Former Sask First Athletes

The recommendations of the 24 players were remarkably similar in nature.

Therefore, the recommendations of the discontinued players and the players presently playing are not separated. Four main themes emerged from the recommendations of the former Sask First athletes. They relate to 1) club coaches, 2) elite level teams, 3) Sask First commitment, and 4) the Sask First cutting process.

#### Club (elite) coaches

There was a tremendous concern over the lack of qualified coaches following the Sask First program. The Sask First coaches appeared to possess a great knowledge for the game, had the ability to teach, and were extremely organized. These coaches were also described as having the knowledge of what "it took" to train at an elite level, as they were former elite softball players. These coaches were also described as teachers of "life skills" which included problem solving, discipline, and respect for others.

The club coaches were almost always compared to the Sask First coaches when the former Sask First players gave their recommendations. It appears that after Sask First

the coaches in the club programs did not "measure up" to the Sask First coaches, which has brought great frustration and disappointment to the players following the completion of the Sask First program. The recommendations for coaching are as follows:

- A. There is a need to show club coaches how to run a practice, understand strategy, teach the game, and manage an elite level team.
- B. There is a need for more elite coaches in the rural areas.
- C. There is a need for more awareness of how to become an elite level coach in those who might have the prerequisite skills and interest.
- D. There is a need for former elite softball players to become elite level coaches. These athletes are aware of what is needed to be an effective high level coach.
- E. There is a need for a better relationship between the club coaches and the Sask First coaches. There is also a need for elite coaches to teach upcoming elite coaches or club coaches.

#### Elite level teams

Again, frustration and disappointment were cited regarding elite level (club) teams in general. The areas of frustration and disappointment ranged from unavailability of an elite team, disorganization of available teams, the inability to problem solve among the teams, and lack of competitiveness. These athletes did not view the next step following Sask First as a progression forward, but rather a step backward. The change from Sask First back to club (elite) ball was viewed as "too drastic a change."

The recommendations of the former Sask First players for elite level teams are as follows:

- A. There is a need for more elite level teams in the Province.
- B. The elite level teams need to be more organized and have the ability to problem solve rationally. This includes both strategic problem solving and problem solving of team dynamics.
- C. There is a need for higher caliber elite level teams following the Sask First program, not only among the larger cities. The transition from Sask First to elite is viewed as a step down rather than a step up. The Sask First experience was viewed as the pinnacle of the players' softball career.
- D. In addition, there is a need for a better relationship between the two systems so that the Sask First players are not in such a "sheltered" world, therefore, moving into a totally different system would be smoother and not so drastic.
- E. There is a need for the players to be offered more after Sask First, and given more information about the National Team. Information regarding making themselves available to college scouts was also recommended.

#### Sask First commitment

A theme that emerged from the recommendations of the former Sask First players was that the Sask First commitment was very focused, rigid, "hyped up," and time consuming. The commitment also appeared to the players as being solely oriented toward winning a medal at the Canada Games.

The recommendations of the former Sask First players on the commitment of the Sask First program are as follows:

- A. Allow the players to be well-rounded individuals, not just focused on softball.
- B. Do not allow the goals of the team to be outcome goals.
- C. The players are too "wired" mentally, and there is a need to have the players simply go out and play ball.
- D. The athletes need to be more aware of the time commitment that is needed to be a part of this program.
- E. Allow players to have more opportunity for fun in the program.
- F. Take into consideration the training and the ages of the players in relation to their physiological capabilities.
- G. There appears to be a need for counseling to be provided to these athletes following the completion of the program. This counseling would be not only for closure, but also to help them make the transition back into the club (elite) teams.

#### The Sask First cutting process

A theme that emerged from the recommendations was that the athletes who were cut from the program in years past harbored bitterness towards the program and the players who did make the team. According to the Sask First players, the cut players' talents were insulted by the blunt letters of the cutting process. When the Sask First



players returned to the club teams (and the players who were cut), they experienced bitterness from the cut players.

The recommendations of the former Sask First players of the cutting process are as follows:

- A. Coaches and athletes need to treat the cut athletes with respect even after these players were cut from the Sask First team.
- B. Do not be overly honest about the lack of skill the players possess when cutting them.

Despite positive memories of Sask First, these athletes not only provided recommendations for change following Sask First, but also with the structure of the program itself. Club coaches, elite level teams, the Sask First commitment, and the Sask First cutting process were among the concerns of these athletes and suggest change for the future.

#### Summary

Twenty-four of twenty-nine possible participants of the Sask First program suggests the results of this study should represent this group of athletes as a whole. The results of this study are consistent with Klint and Weiss's (1986 as cited in Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992), Gould et al. (1986) and White and Coakley's (1986 as cited in Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992) findings of sport transference, as many of the discontinued athletes are playing softball at another level. In addition, many of these athletes are still involved in the sport in some other capacity other than playing.

There was no distinguishable difference among the starters and nonstarters among the groups and all players felt they were capable of playing elite softball after Sask First. Ages of the athletes in relationship to when they began elite level softball and Sask First were not significant factors in relationship to discontinuation or continuation of elite competition. Although, examination of when players entered various levels of softball suggests a trend in continuing or discontinuing. The average age of the discontinued athletes at the time they were interviewed was 23.25 years. The average age of the continuing players was 21.5 years. Almost all of the athletes interviewed participated in various other sports while training for Sask First. Competition levels varied in these sports as well as the number of sports in which each individual participated. Training loads were significantly lower than previous literature on burnout. Athletes discussed a noticeable difference in time spent with friends, but unlike Coakley's (1992) study of burned out athletes' unidimensional lifestyle, most of the Sask First players felt they were satisfied with their life outside softball. Most of the athletes felt they had a positive experience in the Sask First program and that negative experience was not a reason for discontinuation. Whether or not one had been a starter or nonstarter also was not a predictor of continuation or discontinuation.

Some personal and situational factors such as location of the competitive team, career, and significant others team were cited as reasons for discontinuation. Koukouris' (1991) study suggested that discontinuation can be due to stress outside of the sport as well as inside the sporting environment. But despite this, many of the athletes stated that if they had an elite coach after Sask First and the Sask First team could have stayed together

they would have continued to play at an elite level. The players interviewed also stated that they would have continued to play if elite players could stay within close proximity of one another. Group cohesion among the Sask First players was evident as the team was considered "family" to these players and separation after the program was viewed as "drastic".

What might appear as conflicting comments (e.g., Sask First was too rigid, yet elite softball is too lax), is perhaps a matter of needing a happy medium for these athletes. Also, suggesting improvements does not imply negative perceptions, as one player described her Sask First experience, "It was 95% positive and 5% negative." Asking players for recommendations (some had none) was eliciting that 5%. The "perfect" environment of the Sask First team combined with the systemic problems (such as coaching, teams available, and lack of competitiveness/organization) following the completion of the program appear to be the combination for frustration and dissatisfaction and, ultimately, discontinuation. Negative experiences in sport as reasons for withdrawal as suggested by Orlick (1973, 1974 as cited in Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992) were generally encountered after the Sask First experience.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to identify the reasons for attrition following the Sask First high performance program. According to previous literature, factors such as training loads and burnout, personal/situational factors and group cohesion could possibly predict attrition or persistence of sport participation.

The continued and discontinued players are distinguished by their similarities rather than their differences in this study. Trends for more dropouts in this study to have become involved at younger ages are not conclusive, but suggest that it cannot be eliminated as a contributing factor. Although a few athletes cited negative feelings after Sask First, the Sask First experience was generally positive for all of the athletes interviewed and was not a reason cited for discontinuation.

Burnout does not explain discontinuation in these athletes. Although many were tired at the end of the Canada Games, and disappointed in the outcome, only one described feelings and behaviors consistent with burnout. Training loads were not an issue for either group. Many did not adhere closely to the program, but their participation in other sports made such adherence impractical or even inadvisable. They therefore modified their programs -- some systematically, some haphazardly.

significant others, and money were among the factors cited. The primary theme among the continued players presently playing elite level softball was that the love of the game kept them playing elite softball. This is consistent with the social exchange theory as the athlete weighs costs, benefits, and satisfaction of a current situation with those alternative situations and makes a decision accordingly. The weight of costs, benefits, and alternatives are all unique to each individual.

The participation in Sask First clearly affected athletes' perceptions of and standards for sport. In fact, two athletes' response to the question about other sports played since Sask First included admission of playing slow pitch, but they did not consider that sport. The high standards of Sask First created high expectations of softball following the program.

Difficulty occurred when the players attempted to play on other teams or considered playing following completion of the Sask First program. Sask First is a developmental program to the elite programs. Softball following Sask First should be a "progression" to the elite programs, but the Sask First athletes do not view it this way. Most of the athletes felt elite softball after Sask First was a developmental dead end. Although all of the athletes interviewed faced systemic problems in the structure of softball in Saskatchewan following Sask First, the discontinued athletes felt it was not worth sustaining this dissatisfaction for the opportunity to play. The weight of alternative activities such as playing softball at another level or involved in softball in some other capacity was not necessarily more attractive than playing softball at an elite level. Playing softball at another level or being involved in some other capacity appears to be an

alternative to the frustration of the situation. Continuing athletes, on the other hand, were willing to sustain high levels of dissatisfaction following the Sask First program for the chance to play.

The "costs" the athletes faced in their decision to play or no to play after Sask First were extensive travel to play on a team, inadequate coaching, unavailability of elite teams, inadequacy of the elite teams, and lack of competitiveness among other elite players. In addition, alternatives were weighed into the equation. The love of the game and the opportunity to play appeared to be the "benefits" of continuing to play at an elite level.

### Conclusion

Although no single factor is primarily responsible for ceasing participation at an elite level, it appears that problems in the structure of softball in Saskatchewan following Sask First are the primary cause for discontinuation. The differences in the reasons players continued or discontinued elite level softball participation remind us that important decisions are seldom driven by a single issue. The weight of costs, benefits, and alternatives have a significant relationship on players' decisions to play or not to play at an elite level. The weight of costs, benefits and alternatives are all unique to each individual.

Twenty-four athletes in one sport are not a sample that allows generalization to attrition/persistence of athletes in other settings. However, an 82.75% participation rate suggests the results should represent this group, and offers consideration for future research. Comparing other Sask First programs (such as the men's softball team) or other events (e.g., volleyball) to this study would benefit future research. Research regarding

other developmental programs would also be beneficial. Further study should be dedicated to social exchange theory and why individuals drop out rather than tolerate dissatisfaction to play elite level sport. Longitudinal studies monitoring participation patterns of individuals in specific programs would also be beneficial areas for future research.

## APPENDICES



## APPENDIX A

### The Sask First Program

The Sask First program provides elite competition opportunities in various sporting events including track and field, archery, swimming, diving, basketball, volleyball, etc. The Sask First program is available to both men and women. This study focused on the 1989 and 1993 Sask First Women's Softball Team members.

The Sask First program was implemented in 1986 for participation in the 1989 Canada Games which are held every four years. The average ages of the players at the conclusion of the program is approximately 18 years. Most athletes enter the program around 14 years of age. Tryouts were held in seven different locations within the Province of Saskatchewan. The tryouts were characterized as basic skills camps which included skill instruction as well as a player selection process. All athletes within the specified age requirement were allowed to attend these camps. The first camp drew 200 athletes and 80 athletes were selected to return. A second round of instruction and selection was provided and 30 athletes were chosen within the first year to be training team members. Seventeen of these athletes, after a year of participating on the Sask First training team, would be selected to the final Sask First team which would compete in the Canada Games three years following this final selection process.

The athletes' training subsequent to the selection process included sport-specific training, weight training, plyometrics, aerobic and anaerobic training, medicine ball training, and mental training. Training was only one to one and a half hours per day as the coach took into account that most of the athletes competed in numerous other sporting activities. Most of the athletes trained independent of the team setting because the athletes did not live in a central location. The athletes were to keep a training log of their activity and report to the head coach. This system was built on a trust system, and the coach does not know if the athletes actually adhered to the program.

During summer months the athletes were allowed to participate on their club teams, except for the final year of the four-year program when they competed and traveled together as a team. They were also given an anaerobic program over the summer. During the end of August and through September the team primarily met on weekends and continued into the fall and winter months indoors. Christmas and Easter training camps were generally longer (week-long camps). Coinciding with this training the athletes were to maintain their individual training. It is important to note that most of the athletes played on club teams in various sports, high school/college teams and other elite teams (sometimes all in the same season). The training took into account these activities and the training involved.

Both the 1989 team and the 1993 team made one major trip to the United States to compete for 10 days one year before competition at the Canada Games.

## APPENDIX B

### Questionnaire

Code# \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Age when began playing softball: \_\_\_\_\_

Age when began playing elite (Provincial "A" level) softball: \_\_\_\_\_

Age when began playing Sask First: \_\_\_\_\_

Age when completed Sask First: \_\_\_\_\_

Starter: \_\_\_\_\_ Nonstarter: \_\_\_\_\_ (check one)

What levels of softball have you played since completing the Sask First program?

How long have you played ball at any level since completing the Sask First program?

Are you presently competing at an elite level in softball? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

Have you played other sports since Sask First? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no  
At what level?

How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play elite level softball immediately after the Canada Games?

Would you consider your training and participation in the Sask First program

- a) Positive
- b) Negative
- c) Mixed
- d) Indifferent

Why was it \_\_\_\_\_?

If you had a daughter, would you want her to be a part of the Sask First program?  
Why or why not?

How do you perceive the training for Sask First? (Perhaps stressful, routine, easy?)

How many hours per week did you train?

Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

Did you participate in other sports while training for this team? What and at what level did you participate?

If "no", why did you not participate in other sports?

Did you work while training? yes \_\_\_\_\_ or no \_\_\_\_\_

Did you (at some point) attend university during your training?

Did you play university sports?

yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

Overall how much time do you feel you had during your 4-year training for academics, family and friends?

Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

Did you feel you had much input in your training (when to train & how often)?

Do you feel you SHOULD have had more input, or do you think this was a good set up?

After completing your training and the completion of the Canada Games how did you feel?

\_\_\_ Positive about continuing to play at an elite level

\_\_\_ Ready to prepare for National Team opportunities

\_\_\_ Ready to try something else

\_\_\_ Ready to get on with your life

\_\_\_ Uncertain about the future of your participation

OTHER:

How were your health and energy levels?

How did you feel physically?

How did you feel mentally?

Do you feel the present age of the Sask First athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

Questionnaire (cont'd)  
Discontinued Elite Level Softball Player

How long have you been out of elite level softball?

Would you have continued playing at an elite level if the Sask First team could have stayed together?

Did this have any bearing on your discontinuation at an elite level?

Would you have continued at an elite level of softball if you could have still had an elite level coach after the Sask First program?

How important would it be to continue with the same coaches (Sask First coaches)?

Would you have played elite level ball if elite players could stay within close proximity -- as opposed to being scattered across the Province?

Did you have an injury or illness that kept you from competing at an elite level?

Have you pursued other activities that contributed to the discontinuation of elite level softball?

After Sask First was there any elite softball program available for you?

Have the following factors contributed to the discontinuation of elite level summer softball?

- Career
- Schooling
- Significant Others
- Money
- Age
- Location of Competitive Team
- Fun or Lack of Fun

What bearing did being a starter or nonstarter on the Sask First team have on your decision to discontinue competing at an elite level?

How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

Did your parents, family, and friends support you in your training?

Are you planning to reenter (as a player) softball at an elite level?

Are you presently involved in the sport in some other capacity other than a player?

Are you in Physical Education or some other sports related field?

Other than the reasons cited, are there other reasons why you have decided to discontinue competing in softball at an elite level?

Anything else you would like to add?

Recommendations for the Sask First program to increase players' continuation of elite level softball participation:

Questionnaire (cont'd)  
Continuing Elite Level Softball Player

Were you a starter or nonstarter for Sask First?

Do you feel this have any bearing on your decision to continue to play at an elite level?

Have you played elite level softball since completing the Sask First program?  
Has there been a time when you did not compete in elite level softball?

Did your parents, family and friends support you through your training?

How important was it to you to play with the Sask First athletes after the Canada Games?

How important was it to you to have an elite level coach to play for after the Canada Games?

Do you have to travel to a team to be able to play elite level softball ( If "yes", how do you feel about that?)

Have the following factors contributed to the continuation of elite softball?

- Career
- Schooling
- Significant Others
- Money
- Age
- Location of Competitive Team
- Fun or Lack of Fun

How long do you foresee playing softball at an elite level?

How did (do) you feel about playing on another team with players other than Sask First players?

What reasons do you contribute to your continuation of elite level softball? (Why are you still playing?)

How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

Are you presently involved in the sport in some other capacity other than a player?

Are you in Physical Education or some other sports related field?

Anything else you would like to add?

Recommendations for the Sask First program to increase players' continuation of elite level softball participation?



## APPENDIX C

### Initial Letter Sent to Former Sask First Softball Athletes

Dear :

My name is Denise Robinson and I am a former Sask First softball player. I am currently in the University of North Dakota Master's program. For my master's thesis I am researching reasons Sask First softball athletes continue or quit playing elite softball.

The purpose of this study is to better understand attrition following the Sask First softball program. The idea for the study actually came from the former coaches of the Sask First program who are concerned that athletes from the Sask First program are not continuing at an elite level after the program.

I want to learn about your reasons for quitting or continuing elite level participation so the Sask First program can better assist current and future players.

I would like you to participate in this study. You would simply answer questions over the telephone that pertain to your training experience. The interview will be approximately 45 minutes long.

I want to emphasize that if you choose to be a part of this study, your interview information will remain completely confidential. In presenting results, I will focus on group data. When selected quotes from the interviews are used to illustrate important ideas, they will be strictly anonymous, and I will ensure that your identity is protected. I will be using a tape recorder to get complete and accurate information, and to make the interview process more efficient, but these tapes will not be shared and will be erased after the project is finished.

As a participant in this project you have several definite rights. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are free to refuse to answer questions or to stop the interview at any point. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions I will be asking. I want to learn from you and benefit from your expertise so that I can better understand the training experience and reasons for discontinuation/continuation of softball at an elite level.

I will be in contact with you to discuss a convenient time and date I can interview you if you are willing to be a part of this study. If you have any questions before that time please call me at (701)795-3493 (home) or (701)777-4952 (work).

Sincerely,

Denise Robinson

APPENDIX D

Transcripts

001 Transcript

Age: 24

Age when began playing softball: 6

Age when began playing elite ball: 11

Age when began playing Sask First: 15

Age when completed Sask First: 18

Nonstarter

--What levels of ball have you played since completing the Sask First program?

001: 1 year of Jr. B

4 years of Jr. A

1 year Senior B

--How long have you played ball at any level since completing the SF program?

001: 6 Years.

--Are you presently competing at an elite level?

001: No.

--Are you planning to reenter?

001: Yes, next year.

--Have you played other sports since Sask First?

001: No, but I do acquasize.

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

001: Good.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play at an elite level immediately after the Canada Games?

001: Good, really good.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the Sask First program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

001: Mixed. I was always informed that I was the weaker link, and that I could be cut at any moment. But, I was cut, too, during the Sask First process. But the next summer I was called back. And then she kept telling me that I was the weak link, and that I would be cut at any moment. But I didn't care because I was, like, the Sask First program. And I was just happy to be there and happy to be with my friends. And so then, we went to California and had a lot of fun being on the bench, and then I became a starter.

--If you had a daughter would you want her to be a part of the SF program?

001: Yes. I think it is just a really good experience. You get to meet people in the Province, and you get good coaching.

--How do you perceive the training for the SF program?

001: Probably stressful. She always had that threatening thing hanging over your head that if you don't do so well you are going to get cut. I don't know; I think some of us thought that it was stressful.

--How many hours per week did you train?

001: Eleven hours a week on aerobic and skills 3 times a week for an hour or so (14 hours).

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

001: Not really. I did skills stuff, and I did aerobics everyday. I didn't do any of the jogging, but I did aerobics. There was about 6 of us that did the training that we were supposed to, like, the softball stuff. But, the other stuff, no.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

001: Yes, competitive softball and high school track and field.

--Did you work while training?

001: No.

--Did you attend university during your training?

001: No.

Did not play university sports.

--Overall how much time do you feel you had during your training for friends, family, academics, etc.?

001: Probably enough time.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

001: Yes. I missed my grad staggette, and I am pretty bitter about that.

--Did you feel you had enough input in your training, was this a good set up?

001: Yah, I guess so. We just chose when we wanted to do it. We got a choice of what time of day, what days to do it, if we decided to do it. I think this was a good set up, it is hard to satisfy everyone.

--After completing your training and the completion of the Canada Games how did you feel? (LIST)

001: Positive about continuing to play at an elite level. I felt disappointed. I don't think she had the best players. I don't think she did a good job of choosing or recruiting.

--How were your health and energy levels?

001: Good.

--How did you feel physically?

001: I felt I was in top shape.

--How did you feel mentally?

001: Disappointed. I was disappointed in the outcome and the umpiring and the basic game type stuff. Just disappointed.

--Do you feel the present age is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

001: Yes.

--If your training began when you were older (20) do you feel this would have any bearing on you still playing?

001: Yes, probably would've dropped out. When you are 20 you are already in other stuff. When I was 20 I would've been in university and I don't know if I would've had time for it.

--How about if you started when you were 12?

001: If it was that intense, it wouldn't work. You are still doing other things also. In the winter time, you shouldn't be just to one sport.

--How long have you been out of elite level ball?

001: 1 year.

--Would you have continued playing at an elite level if the Sask First team could've stayed together?

001: The only reason I stopped playing was because of the coaching in Sr. A. If the SF team could've stayed together I probably would've still played.

--Would you have continued to play elite level ball if you could have had an elite level coach after SF?

001: Yes.

--How important would it be to continue with the same coaches (SF coaches)?

001: Not that important, it is just we need a high level coach for that high level ball. It wasn't THE coach that would've kept me in, I just think it was the LEVEL of coaching that kept me in.

--Would you have played elite level ball if elite players could be in close proximity?

001: Yah, that would help.

--Did you have an injury or illness that prevented you from playing elite ball?

001: No.

--Have you pursued other activities that have prevented you from playing elite ball?

001: No.

--After Sask First, was there any elite level softball program available to you?

001: Yah.

--Is there one now?

001: Yes.

--How have the following factors affected your decision to discontinue playing at an elite level?

001: Career: Doesn't affect.

Schooling: No.

Significant Others: No.

Money: No.

Age: No.

Location of Competitive Team: No.

Fun or Lack of Fun: Last year was the first year I had fun (in "B").

--What bearing did fundraising have on your decision to discontinue playing elite ball?

001: It was a pain in the butt, but it had no bearing.

--What bearing did being a starter or nonstarter have on your decision to discontinue elite ball?

001: It gives you confidence. I don't think it had any bearing on me playing or not playing. I still wanted to play afterwards.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

001: I think it was good.

--Did your parents, family and friends support you through your training?

001: Yes.

--Are you presently involved in the sport at some other level?

001: Yes, Sr. B.

--Are you presently in the sport at some other capacity?

001: Yes, I do camps, and I coached in Australia.

--Are you in physical education or some other sports related field?

001: Yes, phys. ed.

--Could you sum up why you have discontinued?

001: It would be coaching. The lack of commitment, I don't want to put in the time.

Recommendations:

001: A lot has to do with coaching. Well, if there is not qualified coaches out there for the next level, they are not going to want to play for them. After having good coaching in the Sask First program. I don't think there are a lot out there, actually there is a lot of junk out there.

I don't think they should try and keep the Sask First team together after, it takes away from other communities.

But the opposite, how accepting are other players of Sask First players. The cut players did not accept the Sask First players.



Other players were dicked around by the program. Like, how they were treated. They viewed us as favorites. The coaches did have favorites, though.

**002 Transcript**

Age: 24

Age when began playing softball: 13

Age when began playing elite softball: 15

Age when began Sask First: 15

Age when completed Sask First: 18

Starter

--What levels of softball have you played since completing Sask First?

002: Provincial A ball

--How long have you played ball at any level since Sask First?

002: 5 years.

--Are you presently competing at an elite level?

002: Yes.

--Are you planning to reenter?

002: Yes.

--Have you played other sports since SF?

002: Wallyball--rec

Volleyball--rec

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently competing at an elite level?

002: Yes, very capable.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play elite level ball immediately after the Canada Games?

002: Excellent. I thought that, my goal was to be in the Olympics.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the Sask First program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

002: Positive. It made me more responsible. It made me more independent. In order to get better, I had to do it myself, I couldn't depend on anyone else, in order to get better. It got me into good shape. I was probably in the best shape of my life when I was playing SF ball. The coaching was phenomenal, and that helped me in, it just was positive. And it made me want to continue because the coaching was so good.

--If you had a daughter would you want her to be a part of the SF program?

002: Yes. For the same reasons, for independence, it gives confidence.

--How do you perceive the training for the Sask First program?

002: I didn't think it was easy, after a while I got into a routine, at first I found it difficult to get into that type of routine, it was fine.

--How many hours per week did you train?

002: 12 or 15 hours per week.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

002: Mostly, I had a knee injury, so I couldn't do everything that was on the training program.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

002: Yes. volleyball--high school

basketball--high school

softball--high school

softball--Provincial A

--Did you work while training?

002: No.

--Did you attend university during your training?

002: No.

Did not play university sports

--Overall how much time do you feel you had during your 4-year training for academics, family and friends?

002: It was adequate. I had enough time to go out with my friends and family.

I lived with my family, they would come to training sessions and tournaments. My academics, I finished high school with an "A" average, so my grades didn't suffer because of it.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

002: Yes.

--Did you feel you had enough input in your training, was this a good set up?

002: Oh yah. I like the set up, it gave you the responsibility. And if you didn't do it, they knew you didn't do it for the most part. And if you didn't do it you only hurt yourself.

--After completing your training and the completion of the Canada Games how did you feel? (LIST)

002: Positive about continuing to play at an elite level, and ready to prepare for National Team opportunities.

--How were your health and energy levels?

002: Good, disappointed that we didn't win.

--How did you feel physically?

002: I felt in great shape. I didn't feel it was too much. If you were doing it for 4 years straight, I knew what kind of pressure it would be like. I felt a bit tired after the Canada Games, just for a couple days.

--How did you feel mentally?

002: Disappointed in the outcome. A little bit tired because there was a lot of pressure. It was like a National Championship, just a bit more prestigious. Of course, at that high level your brain is working overtime, so you'll be a little tired, but disappointed that we didn't win and a little tired. But I felt I wanted to move on after. I didn't feel like I wanted to quit.

--Do you feel the present age of the Sask First athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

002: Yes.

--If your training began when you were older, say 20, do you feel it would have affected whether you would still be competing at an elite level?

002: I think it would affect it. When you are 20 and you are interested in school, finding a job and getting a family, that's what you are looking for. Instead of excelling in a sport. Whereas when you are in high school, you have the time if your not working a job to do it. Your body is still at a young age and you can develop and peak. At age 19 you should be good enough you shouldn't have to work at it. Whereas when you are 20, more people are looking for other things.

--How about if you were 12?

002: It is too young because if you start training at an elite level because by the time you hit 19 you don't want to continue anymore and some people might be burned out. I started softball when I was 13 and I think that had to do with why I am still playing. I didn't start playing elite level until I was 16 and I still want to play. Some people that started playing at an elite ball young, some kids get burned out.

--Do you feel being a starter or nonstarter had any bearing on your decision to continue to play elite level ball?

002: Yah, I wasn't the number 1 pitcher on the team, I was still working up to that. I was still learning and working up to that. And when I saw other pitchers at the Canada Games, I knew I could still work up to that level. I still wanted to be noticed. I knew I was the only person that could make that happen by how hard I worked.

--Have you played elite level ball since completing the SF program?

002: Yes, 2 years ago I had wrist and knee injuries.

--Did your parents, family and friends support you through your training?

002: Yes.

--How important was it to you to play with the SF athletes after the Canada Games?

002: It was important to me, especially the ones that came from my area. I knew that some of us would go in different directions, but the main ones that, the better players, the nucleus would try to stay together and play together. Which some of us did, but I thought there would be a few more people that would be with us.

--How important was it to you to have an elite coach to play for after the Canada Games?

002: It WAS important, but it didn't happen. I would've liked for it to happen. I think in that aspect we would have had more players come back. If we would have had better coaching. Not that the coaches weren't, I thought they were adequate enough, just to carry the players we had. I think if we would have had more players come back and play the following year.

--Do you have to travel to be able to play on an elite level team?

002: Yes, I feel frustrated and angry. Because not only the time I played in the Canada Games, but the team after us, they were just as good as we were, there is enough good players in and around where I live to have a team. It is just the coaching that is suffering, it is not helping us out. It is not that we don't have people willing to coach, just that people won't play for that one person. That hurt.

I don't mind playing, I enjoyed playing for the team I had to travel for, and I have played on some teams where the coaching was awesome. It would be a lot better for me if we had that coaching here.

--Have the following factors contributed to the continuation of elite level ball?

002: Career--No.

Schooling--No.

Money--No.

Age--No.

Location of team--No.

Fun/lack of--It was fun up in Saskatoon, but it wasn't fun in Regina.

--How long do you foresee playing ball at an elite level?

002: Another 5 or 6 years.

--How did you feel about playing on another team with players other than SF players?

002: It didn't bother me. It doesn't bother me as long as they are willing to do the training, do what the coaches want us to do, and as long as we get along as a team, I don't have a problem with playing with other players.

--How about playing with coaches other than Sask First coaches?

002: Again, as long as they have the capabilities at coaching at an elite level. It is when they don't have it or can't relate to the players, that's when I would have a problem with it.

--What reasons do you contribute your continuation of elite level ball?

002: I love the competition and I feel through the SF program it made me a better ball player. I feel it made me one of the better ball players in the Province and I still want to play at a competitive level. I like the competition and I feel it is more fun to play at a competitive level rather than recreation.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

002: I really enjoyed playing in the SF program, even though it was disappointing we lost, so I was a bit disappointed, I felt the friends and coaches (who were also friends) that we made are friends that you can keep forever. I think that bond has helped me get along better with other teams. And with the level of competition, that helped too.

--Are you presently involved in softball in some other capacity?

002: Yes, I instruct softball camps, I do pitching clinics, and I help teams during the summer, I also coach high school softball.

--Are you in physical education?

002: I have a minor in phys.ed. I coach high school volleyball, basketball and softball at the school I teach.

--Recommendations:

002: I think some of it has to do with the coaches after. I know Softball Saskatchewan is in the process of training coaches to get them higher up. But I think a lot of it has to do with, like (the Sask First coaches) have both played high elite ball, so they knew what kind of competition, what kind of level we had to be at to win. I think that with coaching, we need that kind of coaching immediately



after Sask First in order to keep those players going. Because, myself, when I finished I would have loved for one of those coaches to have continued coaching. Even though it is kind of hard because they are not getting paid to do it. But there needs to be some of the SF players, or elite players playing after. So I think it has something to do with coaching.

And along with coaching, the training will continue too. I think the main thing is the coaching after, keep coaching, although I know Softball Saskatchewan is training coaches for better level of coaches. Maybe more funding for club teams to go places and travel. Players get sick of fund raising.

### **003 Transcript**

Age: 24

Age when began playing softball: 9

Age when began playing elite softball: 14

Age when began SaskFirst: 16

Age when completed SaskFirst: 18

**Starter**

--What levels of softball have you played since completing the SaskFirst program?

003: Provincials and Nationals (Provincial "A").

--How long have you played ball at any level since completing the SaskFirst program?

003: 6 years.

--Are you presently competing at an elite level?

003: Yes.

--Have you played other sports since SaskFirst?

003: Yes.

Indoor soccer -- city

Women's Hockey -- city

Basketball -- city

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

003: Adequate.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play elite level ball immediately after the Canada Games?

003: Well, I definitely knew I would be playing after that.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the SaskFirst program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

003: Positive. I learned a lot. I learned skills, I learned a lot about dedication, commitment and that was very positive. And about friendships.

--If you had a daughter, would you want her to be a part of the SaskFirst program?

003: Yes. For the same reasons as before.

--How do you perceive the training for the SaskFirst program?

003: It was challenging, it wasn't stressful. I don't think there was any stress, but it was challenging, definitely. It was challenging because I was in grade 11 and 12 and there was so much more to do in high school than travel to Regina for training camps. And I missed out on a lot of that. And there was a real challenge as to whether or not I really wanted to do it. There was challenge in finding enough time to do everything I was doing in high school. And it wasn't an effort thing, it was a time challenge thing.

--How many hours per week did you train?

003: About 1 hour a day, well about 4 hours a week...when there was no camp on the weekends. But I also trained for basketball and stuff too.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

003: Nope. I was already involved in a training program at school. I trained aerobically with the school, so I didn't do hers, but I did her (SF) strength training. I just kind of picked bits and pieces of what I wasn't already doing with hers. I ultimately did what needed to be done, just not what she had laid out.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

003: Yes, High school volleyball

High school basketball

--Did you work while training?

003: Yes.

--Did you at some point attend university during your training?

003: No.

Did not play university sports

--Overall how much time do you feel you had during your 4 year training for academics, friends, family, etc.?

003: I had enough time. I think, there was enough, but I had to make enough time. If I would've just gone with it there wouldn't have been enough time for friends and school and stuff. Luckily I had friends that would come to my ball games and stuff, and that would be the only time I'd get to see them. It does take up a lot, like I said, my grade 12 year, every other weekend I had to travel to Regina, so it was tough. But there is no way around that really.

I don't regret it.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

003: Yes.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training? Was this a good set up?

003: Yes. I though it was a good set up.

--After completing your training and the completion of the Canada Games how did you feel? (LIST)

Positive about continuing to play: Yes

Ready to prepare for National Team opportunities: No.

Burned out or stale: No.

Ready to try something else: No.

Ready to get on with your life: Yes.

Uncertain about the future of your participation: No.

Other: In the last year, it was all ball, ball, ball, and that was my life. I think, you can still play ball at an elite level and still workout and be healthy and active and you are playing ball for 3 or 4 months in the summer and still play it at an elite level with your training in the off-season. And that, because I am leading a healthy lifestyle. And that is how I wanted to get on with my life. I didn't want to be going to training camps every other weekend and stuff like that.

--How were your health and energy levels?

003: Good.

--How did you feel physically?

003: Good.

--How did you feel mentally?

003: Tired.

--Do you feel the present age of the SaskFirst athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level?

003: Yes. If they are any younger, they are going to change so drastically, the coach will never know what they will get. If it is any older that people are getting into careers, and there is not that same commitment as wehn you were in high school.

--If your training began when you were older (20) do you feel it would've effected whether you would still be competing at an elite level?

003: Honestly, yah, because I don't think I would've made it playing club ball for 6 years before SaskFirst. I wouldn't have continued to play in Saskatoon, that long if I wouldn't have played SaskFirst through those years. I don't think I would've been playing.

--How about if it began when you were 12?

003: No, I wouldn't be playing.

--Do you think being a starter had any bearing on your decision to continue to play at an elite level?

003: Yes. If I weren't a starter on SF, I probably would've thought less of the whole program, less of myself and I probably wouldn't have continued.

--Have you played elite level softball since completing the SaskFirst program?

003: Yes

..--Has there been a time when you did not compete in elite-level softball?

003: No.

--Did your parents, family and friends support you through your training?

003: Yes

--How important was it to you to play with the SaskFirst athletes after the Canada Games?

003: It was very important. It was like family, it was our team and that was it.

You train with people for that long, and you feel you get to know them. I don't

know, it was very important for me. I had also taken some time off of club ball (for SF) and I didn't know where I belonged in club ball. Because, the people that weren't in the SaskFirst team went on with club ball and I guess, there was this feeling "Oh, you played on the SaskFirst team", there was a bit of segregation on the team the year after the Canada Games.

--How important was it to you to have an elite level coach to play for after the Canada Games?

003: Very important. Because we had in the SaskFirst team, we were spoiled. We had good coaches, we had good organization, we had immaculate, everything was immaculate. You knew exactly when you were supposed to do what, and for how long. It was ideal. And then to go back to a club team where it was not quite as organized, not quite as laid out was difficult because we were used to the structure. I needed to look for someone who would coach in that fashion, you gotta stick with what you know.

--Do you have to travel to a team to be able to play elite level softball?

003: No.

--Have the following factors contributed to the continuation of elite level softball?

003: Career: No.

Schooling: No.

Significant others: No.

Money: No.

Age: No.

Location of competitive team: No.

fun or lack of fun: Yes. It's, like, I play ball to have fun and I have fun when I play. And if I am not going to have fun, I am not going to play.

--How long do you foresee playing softball at an elite level?

003: Another couple years.

--How do you feel about playing on another team with players other than SaskFirst players?

003: I don't have a problem with it. Being from the SaskFirst program, there is a noticeable difference, between, especially after 1989 there's definately a difference between SaskFirst players and the other players. And I don't know which is better.

I think the SF players had more dedication, commitment and that sort of thing.

But you have to understand that the club team never committed what the SaskFirst players did and they are out there to have fun, they all work hard. They may not do as much away from the ball park as the SaskFirst players do.

--How do you feel about playing on another team with coaches other than SaskFirst coaches?

003: I think I would be pretty picking with who I play for because the coaching in the SF program was very good and was very organized and to go to a team where they just throw a couple of parents together, I couldn't do it, it would be very frustrating.

--What reasons do you contribute to your continuation of elite level ball?



003: Because I love the game, I still have fun playing ball. I have met a ton of people, I have travelled the Country.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

003: I felt proud of myself, my teammates and my coaches. I felt sad that it was all over. I felt positive about everything I learned and the way I could use it in my future to keep in better shape and continue to do better in ball.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other capacity other than a player?

003: I do lots of softball clinics.

--Are you in physical education or some other type of sports related field?

003: Yes, physical education.

Recommendations:

003: All-in-all I would like to comment that I think it is a great program. I would definitely want my daughter in the program, or if I coached young players and thought that they could play at an elite level I would recommend the program. I recommend the softball clinics and that sort of thing. I think that is all great. The only conflict is that I could not be committed to it for 4 years. I had all my other sports and a whole lot of other things going on through my first couple years of high school. I was with the program for a year and then I quit and then I joined back up with it the last two. I don't think I would've made it if I wouldn't have taken that year off. That's not. I don't even know if that should be a recommendation, to shorten the program. Because I look at all the other players

that did make it, it was just, if you have an athlete that you want involved in the program, and they are very busy with extracurricular activities with school then it is tough, it is really tough.

It was the time commitment and the personal commitment that made me quit (the SF program). I knew I couldn't be totally faithful to the program. I mean, I couldn't be faithful at all, to be honest with you. And I just felt that was not fair at all. That was not fair to me, that was not fair to the program, so.

#### **004 Transcript**

Age: 24

Age when began playing softball: 10

Age when began playing elite level ball: 19

Age when began SaskFirst: 15

Age when completed SaskFirst: 18

Nonstarter

--What levels of ball have you played since completing the SaskFirst program?

004: Provincial "A" ball only.

--How long have you played ball at any level since completing the SaskFirst program?

004: 5 years.

--Are you presently competing at an elite level in softball?

004: Yes.

--Have you played other sports since SaskFirst?

004: Rec volleyball

Rec slow pitch

Rec walleyball

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

004: Physically, I do believe I (hitting and skill wise) and as good if not better than SaskFirst. And mentally, I am probably a 100 times better, just through experience I have gained.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play elite level ball immediately after the Canada Games?

004: Good. I thought I had the capabilities to play jr. and sr. "A" ball.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the SaskFirst program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

004: It was 95% positive and 5% negative. The 95% being I got tougher, I grew up quicker. It taught me to go for goals, and not to give up. When I started SaskFirst they told me they would try their hardest to keep me on the training team, and I could have quit then, but it taught me --through the training and stuff - that the coaches believed in me and it kept me going through the training and stuff. And the 5% was always worrying about whether or not you were going to get cut or not. But in the same sense, it made you stronger.

--If you had a daughter, would you want her to be a part of the SF program?

004: Definitely, actually my little sister tried out. I would want her to be a part of it for the goals and the 95% positive stuff. It just, it's just a real character builder.

--How do you perceive the training for the SaskFirst program?

004: It wasn't easy. Probably because I had never been at an elite level before in any sport it was a real eye opener after the first training camp and you could not even walk down a set of stairs after. I thought it was tough, but at the same time it was good, because after you got into the swing of things, you started to feel really good about yourself because you were training hard, because it got easier once you got into the swing of things as time went on.

--How many hours per week did you train?

004: About 12 hours a week, at least.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

004: Yes, I tried to follow it to a "T". I enjoyed doing the anaerobic more, I sometimes substituted anaerobic activities more.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

004: High school volleyball

High school softball

--Did you work while training?

004: No.

--Did you attend university during your training?

004: No.

Did not play university sports

--Overall how much time do you feel you had during your 4 year training for academics, friends, family, etc.?

004: The friends thing really decreased simply because of peer pressure and that kind of stuff, where they would want to go out and you knew that when they went out there would be things involved that should not concern an elite athlete like drinking, and that sort of stuff. And so a lot of the time I chose not to go with them because they just did not know what it took to be an elite athlete. So to avoid confrontation, I just avoided it altogether. And family, they were very supportive of me and so I had lots of time to be with them and stuff. Academics, well if you did your training in the morning and after school, you had lots of time for academics.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

004: Yah, I was. But at the same time softball was a major part of my life. I had great satisfaction in softball, and that gave me greater self-esteem.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training? Do you feel this was a good set up?

004: It didn't say WHEN you should train. I mean it was weekly, but it never specified a time. The time of day, you could train whenever you wanted to. So that gave some variation to your training program. What you had to train was set out for you and that was good. Some people need to be told what to do rather than given a choice which was good because some people when given a choice choose not to do it.

I thought it was a very good set up.

--After completing your training and the completion of the Canada Games how did you feel (LIST)?

004: Positive about continuing to play at an elite level.

Ready to prepare for National team opportunities.

--How were your health and energy level?

004: I had all the energy in the world!

--How did you feel physically?

004: Very strong.

--How did you feel mentally?

004: Frustrated. Strong mentally because I had seen how far I had come. But at the same time, frustrated because the game was lost by chance. Frustrating that you could work so hard and lose it so easily.

--Do you feel the present age of the SaskFirst athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

004: Yes. Because it is also preparing you for the National team, after you get off of that. You work into Jr. and after Jr. is the time the National Team notices you, so I think it is a good builder. You are starting young enough that you want to want to do this. You are tough enough to do it.

--What if you were older (20)?

004: I don't know. Maybe at 20 years old people are more career orientated, looking to work more often and that would take away from the eliteness of the

program because you would have more commitments in other areas. So I feel the commitments would interfere with the main goals of the program.

--What if you were younger (12)?

004: I don't know if at 12 you're mentally tough, mature enough, goal driven enough to be in that type of program. I think that girls at that age are still boy crazy, just not focused enough. But I also see starting kids in an earlier age has helped Saskatchewan's talent in clinics and stuff.

--Do you feel being a nonstarter had any bearing on your decision to continue to play at an elite level?

004: No, I don't. Now that I look back on the situation, I understand the coaching and the reasons why the coaches made those decisions.

--Have you played elite level softball since completing the SaskFirst program?

004: Yes.

--Has there been a time when you did not compete at an elite level?

004: I didn't play 2 years ago, but played last year.

--Did your friend, family and parents support you through your training?

004: Yes, very much so.

--How important was it to you to play with the SaskFirst athletes after the Canada Games?

004: I think very important because we became a family. You knew one another inside out, you knew when one was going to have a crabby day, you just knew one another. It was very much a family.

--How important was it to you to play for an elite level coach after the Canada Games?

004: Very important, in fact, that is why I moved to Saskatoon to play.

--Do you have to travel to a team to play elite level softball?

004: Yes, I do. It is mentally and physically tough. You are leaving right after work to make a game at 7:30 and after that game you are traveling home and you do not make it home until 1 or 2 in the morning. It's tough. And of course the training aspect of it. You do not get the same training as the rest of the team because you can't make all the practices. You can only do so much here by yourself.

--Have the following factors contributed to the continuation of elite-level summer softball?

Career: My career is pretty flexible.

Schooling: I was always out during ball season.

Significant others: He is very supportive.

Money: It is tough to travel and compete and tournaments. Fundraising has to be done, it's just part of the season.

Age: Age is OK, you have to train a little harder.

Location of competitive team: Just very tiring, both mentally and physically, but it is worth it. Simply because if that is what it takes to play elite ball, then I'm there.



Fun or lack of fun: 1990 was hell, it wasn't fun. This last year we had so much fun. There was none of that attitude business, none of that kind of stuff. We had so much fun. This was probably the first year since SaskFirst that I had fun.

--How long do you foresee playing softball at an elite level?

004: I kind of take it year by year. I see myself playing this next year, Nationals are in Saskatoon. After that decisions about career and family and it would be tough traveling to Saskatoon with children and stuff. If we decide to have children, that would be the determining factor whether I will not I will travel to Saskatoon or not.

--How do you feel about playing on another team with players other than SF players?

004: I've done it and up until this year, it was in some ways very tough because they did not know what it took to be an elite athlete. I didn't feel. It was frustrating seeing them drinking before tournaments and stuff. And the practices weren't as intense and it was very frustrating at times. But this year, playing Sr. "A" ball it seemed the maturity level was up there. People still had their beers and stuff, but when they came to practice, they were there to practice and that made a world of difference. They wanted to come to practice.

--How did you feel about being on a team with coaches other than SF coaches?

004: Frustrating again, simply because of lack of knowledge made it frustrating. And it seemed some of the time you were asked what is the better way, and that sort of stuff. That is frustrating because it took away from my training time.

--Why are you still playing?

004: For the love of the game. In the winter time I don't play any sports, and I feel gross. When I play ball I have energy and my self-esteem goes up.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

004: After the Canada Games it was frustrating because you trained so hard and you'll lose it within a blink of an eye -- luck, umpires. As far as training, after being disappointed, you look back and see how far you've come since day one. And that makes you proud about yourself.

--Are you presently involved in the sport at some other capacity other than a player?

004: Coach peewee "A"

Instruct at clinics

--Are you in physical education or some other type of sports related field?

004: Physical activities studies.

Recommendations:

004: What I find is you have a number of kids come to try outs and the kids are weeded out within 4 hours. The cutting and the viewing should be on a longer time frame (this year). Give the kids a couple chances to come out like we were allowed. If you see a child that is just mentally tough and a go-getter, those kids will come back and be strong.

(TALKING ABOUT THE 1996 FORMAT).

--Why do you think so many of us aren't playing anymore?

004: It is personal, like career, significant others, etc. Sometimes it is just burn out. It is what you take from the program and perceive it.

### 005 Transcript

Age: 24

Age when began playing softball: 5

Age when began playing elite ball: 12

Age when began SaskFirst: 15

Age when completed SaskFirst: 18

Starter

--What levels have you played since completing SF?

005: Sr. City Leagues ("B")

--How long have you played ball at any level since completing the SaskFirst Program?

005: 6 years.

--Are you presently competing at an elite level?

005: No.

--Are you planning to reenter?

005: No.

--Have you played other sports since SaskFirst?

005: Yes. Football -- Prov. "A"

Basketball -- city league

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

005: If I did the training I could. Right now I'm not in shape to play elite ball.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play elite level ball immediately after the Canada Games?

005: Very capable.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the SF program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

005: Positive. You learn a lot about the sport, you learn a lot about yourself, about being a team player, about hard work, sacrifice. I guess.

--If you had a daughter would you want her to be a part of the SaskFirst program?

005: Yes, for the same reasons.

--How do you perceive the training for the SaskFirst program?

005: It was fairly routine, it could have been stressful, it became easy. I don't think that a lot of people actually did it. It wasn't monitored as much as it should have been. I think a lot of us could have been in better shape if we actually would've done the workouts.

--How many hours per week did you train?

005: Probably 7 hours per week

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

005: Somewhat. I did a lot on my own, the stuff I had from track. I did some of the stuff that was on our program. I didn't do it as faithfully as I was supposed, I would say. I probably did more of the skills rather than the cardiovascular workouts.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

005: Yes. Track -- Prov. "A"

Softball -- Prov. "A"

High School softball

High School Track

--Did you work while training?

005: Yes.

--Did you at some point attend university?

005: No.

Did not play university sports.

--Overall how much time do you feel you had for family, friends and academics?

005: I think I had just enough time to do all those things plus softball. I mean some weekends you were gone, and it was a bummer, but that wasn't really the end of the world. I had a lot of friends on the team so it didn't matter.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

005: Yes.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training, was this a good set up?

005: Somewhat, it was pretty much laid out but you were still given a choice if you were going to do it, when you would take your days off, yah. You had some say, as long as you followed the program. At that point in my life it was probably a good set up.

--After completing your training and the Canada Games how did you feel (LIST)?

005: None. I felt very positive about the experience and I still wanted to play. But I wasn't prepared to spend another four years of my life devoted to softball, but I didn't want to give it up. I still wanted to play softball, but I wouldn't agree to play at a provincial level.

--How were your health and energy levels?

005: Same as always. I was in better shape.

--How did you feel physically?

005: Good.

--How did you feel mentally?

005: Good.

--Do you feel the present age of the SaskFirst athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

005: Yes.

--If your training began when you were older (20) do you feel it would have affected whether you would still be competing at an elite level?

005: I think it would. The older you get, the more you have going on in your life. I mean in high school what do you have going on in your life besides boys, school and sports.

--What if your training began when you were younger (12)?

005: I think for the majority it would be a little young. May not stick with it or lose interest.

--How long have you been out of elite level softball?

005: 6 years.

--Would you have continued playing at elite level softball if the SaskFirst team could have stayed together?

005: Yes, I could never find the team and competition that I was used to, I was still in the competitive mode. And I wanted to play with and against teams like that. The Regina league was kind of some of them just showed up when they wanted to, some didn't show up. But I wasn't willing to give up four nights a week and for practices, games and tournaments, so it was mixed. I wanted to have a great team, but I wasn't willing to spend my whole spring/summer training.

--Would you have continued at elite level ball if you could have still had an elite level coach after the SF program?

005: Yeah, probably, I don't know, I didn't want to put in the time.

--How important would it be to continue with the same coaches?

005: It really wasn't important.

--Would you have played elite level ball if elite players could stay within close proximity?

005: Yah.

--Did you have an injury or illness that kept you from competing at an elite level?

005: No.

--Have you pursued other activities that have contributed to your discontinuation of elite level ball?

005: No.

--After SaskFirst was there any elite softball program available to you?

005: Not really, I would have to travel.

--Is there one now?

005: No, I would have to go to Saskatoon.

--Have the following factors contributed to the discontinuation of elite level summer softball?

Career -- No.

Schooling -- No.

Significant Others -- No.

Money -- No.

Age -- I probably have different interests.

Location of competitive team -- Yes, I would have to travel to Saskatoon.

Fun or lack of -- I'd say lack of fun.



--What bearing did being a starter have on your decision to discontinue playing elite ball?

005: It had no bearing.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

005: I felt proud, I felt positive.

--Did your parents, family, and friends support you through your training?

005: Very much.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other level?

005: No, this was the first year I didn't play any type of ball.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other capacity?

005: Yes, I coach high school softball.

--Are you in physical education or some other type of sports related field?

005: Yes, Phys. Ed.

Sum up:

I would say, the team that I was affiliated in Regina was the reason I stopped playing. The level of ball was not competitive enough for me. The coaching staff was brutal, the commitment of the players was unacceptable. I practically ran the team. I told the coach what to do, how to do it, when to practice, etc.

If I didn't tell the caoch what to do at practice, we would be standing in the field while he hit balls at us.

Recommendations:

I would say, coaching. Teach the coaches, get to know the coaches, show them how to run a practice. How to keep the kids interested. Basically I think it all comes down to coaching.

The only thing I would like to say, from my SaskFirst experience, I think it was excellent, and because I was a SaskFirst player I wish I could still be playing. If I could find the right team or league or situation. But that isn't really an option right now. Right now I think the only option I see for me staying in competitive softball would be the coaching side. I would love to continue to play, but for me to play with a bunch of yahoos is a waste of my time.

### 006 Transcript

Age: 25

Age when began playing softball: 4

Age when began playing elite level softball: 10

Age when began SaskFirst: 15

Age when completed SaskFirst: 19

Starter

--What levels of softball have you played since completing SaskFirst?

006: Beer league, rec league.

--How long have you played ball at any level in softball?

006: 6 years.

--Are you presently competing at an elite level in softball?

006: No.

--Are you planning to reenter (AT AN ELITE LEVEL).

006: No.

--Have you played other sports since SaskFirst?

006: Yes.

Rec: wallyball gym workouts, aerobics

volleyball

basketball

racquetball

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

006: I don't think I could presently play at an elite level.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play at an elite level immediately after the Canada Games?

006: Very good.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the SaskFirst program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

006: Mostly positive, but there are some negative aspects to it. Too focused, it took over my life sort of thing. I only had one facet of my identity. That's about it.

--If you had a daughter would you want her to be a part of the SaskFirst program?

006: Yes. Because of the confidence it gave me, because of the overall aspect of competing in sports, and the advantages it gave me, the possibilities it gave me.

To compete at a high level, to travel, just to encourage to be the best that you could.

--How do you perceive the training for the SaskFirst program?

006: Challenging. It forced you to expand emotionally and physically. It taught you new things, it gave you, to expand your horizons on your mental capabilities especially.

--How many hours per week did you train?

006: Typically for winter about 10 hours a week. Spring and summer about 30.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

006: Not totally, no. I didn't do enough aerobic. I did it on an occasional level rather than doing it specifically. And I should have done more weight training. I did a general, just "being active" and practicing skills.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

006: High school basketball

High school volleyball

High school softball

Rec volleyball

Rec basketball

Rec wallyball

Rec racquetball

High school track

--Did you work while training?

006: Yes.

--Did you at some point attend university while training?

006: Yes.

--Did you play university sports?

006: Played 1 year of softball (got injured).

--Overall how much time do you feel you had during your 4 year training for academics, friends, family, etc.?

006: It depended on the time of the year. In the winter I had a lot more time, but in the summer time it was limited to the time I could spend with them. At the time it was fine because it was something I was focused on, I had a goal. But looking back now, I wish I would have had a little more diversity in my life. I wish it wasn't just so focused just on ball. I would have had a social life, maybe a date!

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

006: Again, then I was. Now, looking back, no.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training, do you feel this was a good set up?

006: No. I think I should have had more input. Just the choices I was given. We were given specific things. For example, I didn't like to run at that point, and that was part of our program. We weren't given alternatives. More the idea of the training program was an excellent idea, but it has to be more coordinated to the actual person rather than giving a general outlook.

--After completing your training and completion of the Canada Games how did you feel? (LIST)

Positive about continuing to play ball -- No.

Ready to prepare for national team opportunities -- No.

Burned out or stale -- Yes.

Ready to try something else -- Yes.

Ready to get on with your life -- Yes.

Uncertain about the future of your participation -- Yes.

"Lost" -- like not knowing where to go. I was more "lost" than uncertain. Like, I felt like I had lost my identity, like I was no longer "My name is Nicky, I am a SaskFirst softball player". I was just "(Susan)". And also after the Canada Games were done, they had nothing to do with us really. We were just left in the works sort of thing. We had no closure sort of thing.

Regret that we lost, regret that I didn't play well. My whole four years was focused on playing well and I sucked the big one. I just felt my capabilities were more than what I showed on that field.

--How were your health and energy levels?

006: My health was fine, but my energy level was low.

--How did you feel physically?

006: Drained.

--How did you feel mentally?

006: Burned out, drained.

--Do you feel the present age of the SaskFirst athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

006: Yes.

--If your training began when you were older (20) do you feel it would have affected whether you would still be playing ball?

006: No. I don't believe it would be a good thing. At that age you would be set in your ways type thing. There is no real opportunity for you to develop.

--With that question in mind, what if your training began when you were 12 years of age?

006: If it were younger, it would be fine, but it would have to be less intense. If it was more of a grass-roots program, like they are doing now it's great, It's teaching people things that they can develop on. But if it was doing things at the intensity we were at so many girls will drop out.

--How long have you been out of elite level softball?

006: 6 years.

--Would you have continued playing at an elite level if the SaskFirst team could have stayed together?

006: Because I was so drained and just the whole idea of the travel that is involved. Like, we didn't do much traveling because our coach was from Regina, but it could be a lot of travel.

--Did this have any bearing on your continuation at an elite level?

006: Yah, I think it did. I didn't want to play with players that were less than what I had been with. It is so tough, even when I first went back, it was frustrating.

Now my level is right down with them! (JOKE)

--Would you have continued at an elite level softball if you could have still had an elite level coach after the Canada Games?

006: Unsure, I don't know. I don't know if I was mentally capable of it.

--How important was it to you to continue with the same coaches (SF)?

006: Probably yes. If Shirley would have stayed on, I probably would have stayed at an elite level.

--Would you have played elite level ball if players could stay within close proximity -- as opposed to being scattered across the Porovince?

006: Yes.

--Did you have an injury or illness that kept you from competing at an elite level?

006: No.

--Have you pursued other activities that contributed to the discontinuation of elite-level softball?

006: No.

--After SaskFirst was there any elite softball program available for you? No, I would've had to travel to Saskatoon.

--Is there one now?

006: No.



--Have the following factors contributed to the discontinuation of elite level summer softball?

Career: No.

Schooling: No.

Significant Others: No.

Money: Yes.

Age: No.

Location of team: Yes.

Fun/Lack of: Yes. I wasn't having fun anymore, it was more of a "have to win" type thing. It was more of a "I have to go out there, do everything right. Hit the ball, that's it" (for SaskFirst). I forgot to how to have fun.

--What bearing did bearing a starter or nonstarter have on your decision to continue?

006: None.

--What bearing did fundraising for an elite level summer softball team have on your decision to stop playing?

006: None.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

006: I had mixed feelings. I felt, overall, it was a positive experience, but I left with a bitter taste of regret after. Again, from not winning the gold; from what seemed our only goal. And just things that happened throughout the Games. Like

my last at bat, she put in a pinch-hitter for me and it just totally took every ounce of confidence I had left from me.

--Did your parents, family and friends support you through your training?

006: Very much.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other level?

006: Yes, I am in a mixed fastball league.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other capacity?

006: I do summer softball camps.

--Are you in physical education or some other type of sports related field?

006: No.

--Other than the reasons cited, are there other reasons why you have decided to discontinue competing at an elite level?

006: Basically, I want to go out and have fun. I didn't want my life to depend on whether I win or lose as to how I feel about myself.

And I wanted an identity other than softball.

**Recommendations:**

Allow them to be well-rounded individuals, having the total focus not just on softball, but expanding the person. Allowing them to have a life outside of sports in general and softball. And to have, fine there is one common goal at the end, but even if you don't reach that goal, you are still a great player, and you are still a good person, even though you didn't win the gold. When we didn't even win

the plaoffs, it shook my whole foundation. We also were too wired, we were thinking too much. I still think about it today.

**008 Transcript**

Age: 23

Age when began playing softball: 9

Age when began playing elite softball: 16

Age when began Sask First: 13

Age when completed Sask First: 16

Nonstarter

--What levels of ball have you played since completing Sask First?

008: Provincial "A"

--How long have you played ball at any level since completing SaskFirst?

008: 6 years.

--Are you presently competing at an elite level of softball?

008: Yes.

--Have you played other sports since SaskFirst?

008: Yes.

Volleyball -- Rec

Badminton -- Rec

Curling -- Provincial "A"

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

008: I'm positive I can play at a provincial "A" level, but it will now be difficult because I have now moved to senior. But, I have played one year of senior before, so it's not that big of a change.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play elite level softball immediately after the Canada Games?

008: Oh, I was very confident.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the SF program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

008: Very positive. It carries onto other sports, it's not softball specific alot of the things we learned. Which I think it is positive. As far as mental training, even training in general, anaerobic and aerobic training. That type of thing can carry into volleyball or basketball or that type of thing. And the mental training carries over into every sport that you do, I think.

--If you had a daughter would you want her to be a part of the SaskFirst program?

008: Most definitely. I shouldn't say 'most definitely', if, it would depend on the coach that was there. If it was the coach that was there now it would be questionable, but if it was the same coach as we had, there would be no hesitation. Well, I think the first thing is I think the opportunities are endless. Before I had been on the SaskFirst program, I had never even left the province, and we did so much traveling and you met so many people and you just learned an incredible amount about softball in general. And other things as well that it was very worthwhile, learning experience.

--How do you perceive the training for the SaskFirst program?

008: I think it was, not, well, stressful in that you were worried about the consequences were if you didn't do it, but at the same time it was focused on too much, like or aerobic training. Because when we hit the Canada Games that didn't even come into play (I don't feel). We should've concentrated more on other things, like hitting and that was more important. I think a lot of the time we got wrapped up in, mental training is very important, but in some ways I think that was our downfall. Just because, I remember being there, and everyone was so high strung and working so hard at being mentally prepared. Whereas if we would've focused on, well, it seemed like the Canada Games was the be-all-and-end-all. It was just so built up. And then when we failed it was just the end of the world. Whereas, I don't think that's the way it should have been.

--How many hours per week did you train?

008: I didn't do a whole lot extra training, like the running, I wasn't as faithful as I should've been. As far as playing catch and hitting, I did something ball-related everyday. So you could say 7 to 10 hrs a week.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

008: No. I worked more on my skills, rather than strength and stuff.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

008: Yes.

High school curling

High school volleyball

Provincial curling

Club Softball

--Did you work while training?

008: No.

--Did you at some point attend university during your training?

008: No.

Did not play university sports.

--Overall how much time do you feel you had during your 4 year training for academics family, friends, etc.?

008: I think I lost a lot of time with family and friends. Just because it took away a lot of Sundays that I would spend with my family. It was difficult to go back to school after spending a weekend with a different set of, a different group of people, and they had had their fun on the weekend and you would try relate with different incidences that you had done, and they would just be, "Oh yah" because they really wouldn't understand what you had went through. So that was difficult. And you would miss out on so many things that they would be talking about because you weren't there.

But I wouldn't change it.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

008: Yah.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training? Do you feel this was a good set up?

008: Well, not really, just "This is what you need to do." As far as when I needed to do it, that was up to me. I could do it after school, I could do it in the morning when I woke up, that was up to me. But as far as what I should be doing, that was already preset. I don't think I would have done it regardless. I think it was a good guideline as for WHAT I SHOULD be doing, as far as 10 reps and 10 set of squats times three times three. No, it didn't happen.

--After completing your training and the completion of the Canada Games how did you feel? (LIST)

008: Uncertain about the future of my participation, but moreso "That's it, that's what we worked for the whole three years for." The whole thing with the rain-out and everything that was really disappointing. And I can say uncertain just because you had made all these new friends on your ball team but you never knew if you would play with them again, and you wanted to, and you really didn't want to go back to the "noncompetitive" part of softball. So that was really difficult.

--How were your health and energy levels?

008: Good. But I was tired, I just didn't get good enough sleep as I would've normally. And just from being so stressed that you just finally want to stop and relax for a bit.

--How did you feel physically?

008: Good, yah no complaints.

--How did you feel mentally?

008: It was almost kind of depressed, kind of an empty kind of feeling. You knew that it was over, just the finality, that it was all over.

--Do you feel the present age is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

008: No.

I think the team would do better if the team was a little older. I reached my peak one or two years after SF, but, mind you, I was a little younger than the rest of the team. For me, I would've liked to have been older.

--If your training began when you were older (20) do you feel it would have affected whether you would still be competing at an elite level?

008: Most definitely, but I guess it would depend. I would've been married, so I guess it would depend on my spouse and where we would be at that time.

--What if your training began when you were 12 years of age?

008: For me, I loved the game then. And I would've done anything to play longer. I don't feel the level of ball would've been at a provincial level. That's a tough one.

--Do you feel being a nonstarter had any bearing on your decision to play at an elite level?

008: Yes and no. Yes, because I never really played at a provincial level. I think I only played 1 and a half games at the Canada Games, so I wasn't really sure if I was at that caliber. Though, after it was just a matter of saying "Just because I wasn't a starter, doesn't mean I could've been", it was just a different circumstance. No, because I had offers to play and be a starter the following year on a club team. The year after SaskFirst turned out to be the most awful year in the world.



--Have you played elite level ball after SF?

008: Yes, every year.

--Has there been a time when you did not play at an elite level of ball?

008: No.

--Did your parents, family and friends support you through your training?

008: Yep.

--How important was it to you to play with the SaskFirst athletes after the Canada Games?

008: To me it was very important, just to know that I would be at that same level of competitiveness. Whereas to go back to say playing in Hague (small town) I wouldn't find any joy in that. It wouldn't be something I wanted to do, I was still looking for that competitive aspect of the game.

--How important was it to you to have an elite level coach to play for after the Canada Games?

008: I think it was very important. I think it would've been too drastic of a change otherwise. I was still at a point where I could learn more. I think that is why a lot of people quit. I think they may have tried for their first year out, but the coaching was just so different that it was just very frustrating and they thought, "Nobody could teach me more than what (the Sask First coaches) did, so why bother?"

Just with being with the same coach for 3 or 4 years you get to know their still and what they are looking for and how to impress them. Whereas, with other

coaches, especially with males, it is much more nonpersonal level. It's either you are playing or you're not. It is not, "Well, you have a lot of potential, and we'll work with you." You know, that type of motherly kind of thing.

It was different with the players too, just because they knew "She was with SaskFirst" and there were higher expectations. I think there were bitter feelings toward those players who had got cut. And they think that they wanted to prove that they were just as good even though they got cut from the SaskFirst team.

--Do you have to travel to be able to play elite level softball?

008: Now I do yah. About 20 minutes. It is a lot of driving, but I feel it is worth it. I mean I did it all through SF, I commuted 35 minutes.

--Have the following factors contributed to the continuation of elite level softball?

(LIST)

Career: No.

Schooling: No.

Significant Others: No.

Money: No.

Age: Yah, if I were young enough to play Jr. I should.

Location of competitive team: No, I would've played regardless

Fun: I wouldn't play if, I wouldn't say "FUN", but if we didn't win. Because to me winning is fun, I don't like to lose. So being on a winning team was always very important to me.

--How long do you foresee playing softball at an elite level?

008: Maybe 1 more year.

--How do you feel about playing on another team with players other than SaskFirst players?

008: Now, I love it.

--What reasons do you contribute your continuation of elite level softball?

008: I enjoy the game, and the competitive aspect of it.

--How did you feel about the Canada Games and the whole training process?

008: Just, it just stopped so quickly. It was just an end to the whole four years. And it really didn't live up to its expectations. I was expecting the Canada Games to be this wonderful place where we would have so much fun and it was just the exact opposite.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other capacity other than a player?

008: I just finished coaching.

--Are you in physical education or some other sports related field?

008: Physical education.

Recommendations:

I don't know, it is so much an individual thing. So much depends on what happened after, directly after. I felt a lot of people quit the first year after SaskFirst. They tried it again and decided they didn't want to be so terribly competitive, they wanted to have their weekends off. A lot of the girls, because it

was such a time commitment, the girls missed out on a lot of their socializing felt they wanted to play slow pitch and drink beer type-of-thing.

As far as a recommendation, I don't know how there can be. There is no way you could NOT train as much.

The most important thing was that the Canada Games were so hyped up. It was the be-all-and-end-all of the program. After a bad experience like that you wonder "It happened once, will it happen again?" and is it all worth putting myself through this.

### 010 Transcript

Age: 24

Age when began playing softball: 9

Age when began playing elite ball: 18

Age when began SaskFirst: 17

Age when completed SaskFirst: 18

Nonstarter

--What levels of ball have you played since completing SaskFirst:

010: Sr. "A"

Internationally, New Zealand

Jr. "A" and Jr. "B"

--How long have you played ball at any level since SaskFirst?

010: 5 years.

--Are you presently competing at an elite level?

010: No.

--Are you planning to reenter?

010: Yes.

--Have you played other sports since SF?

010: Slow pitch, but that's not a sport.

Curling -- city mixed provincials

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

010: Capabilities, right now would be down to be about 30% because I have taken a year off. And as a pitcher, it is kind of hard to get back in. I will be struggling when I get back. I guess, as I get older you get more cautious, you depend more on your mental ability. And physical-wise you peak at a certain age, and I think I am past that.

Everything is kind of diminished.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing at an elite level immediately after the Canada Games?

010: I think it would've been a real benefit, a real asset after SaskFirst because it is such an intense program. To keep in right after, would have been valuable. I guess, physically I could have continued. But mentally, I don't think I was that set on controlling my mental attitudes.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the Canada Games positive, negative, mixed, or indifferent?

010: It was kind of mixed. It was positive in many ways. As far as experience travelling-wise and seeing that type of ball. It was kind of a once-in-a-lifetime. As far as the social skills, I found it really tough coming from a small town. I didn't know anybody and starting a year and a half late, I just found that it was a bit tougher. But, I guess, overall positive. You can put that.

--If you had a daughter would you want her to be a part of the SF program?

010: Yes. It was an opportunity of a lifetime. And it's really nice to look back on, you know, "I was a part of SaskFirst." It was kind of a historical moment I guess. It was good for experience.

--How do you perceive the training for the SaskFirst program?

010: It was kind of a pain in the butt. But, I look back now and I still use the anaerobic and aerobic workouts that we were given. I still use that. And I think now that I am mentally set, it is a good program. But back then, it was kind of a pain.

--How many hours per week did you train?

010: It was kind of hard because I was by myself. I wasn't in the city. The ones who did help me, I can honestly say not very much. I wasn't very faithful. Well, I pitched everyday, but it was kind of like, whatever. Maybe 6 to 8 hours.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

010: No I didn't.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for SF?

010: Yes. Curling -- Jr.

010: It was kind of mixed. It was positive in many ways. As far as experience travelling-wise and seeing that type of ball. It was kind of a once-in-a-lifetime. As far as the social skills, I found it really tough coming from a small town. I didn't know anybody and starting a year and a half late, I just found that it was a bit tougher. But, I guess, overall positive. You can put that.

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--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

010: No I didn't.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for SF?

010: Yes. Curling -- Jr.

Curling -- High school

Sr. Women's "D" ball

--Did you work while training?

010: No.

--Did you attend university at some point in your training?

010: No.

Did not play university sports

--Overall how much time do you feel you had during your 4 year training for academics, friends, family, etc.?

010: I think I had extensive time. It was a good amount. I wasn't shy of nothing.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

010: Yes.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training was this a good set up?

010: No, I don't think I did. AS far as the input, what I put into it. It worked out ok I guess. I guess it wa a good set up.

--After completing your training and the completion of the Canada Games how did you feel? (LIST)

010: I felt kind of burned out and I wanted to do something else. I guess after Sf I just kind of, I guess try something else. I guess I just, after that I did whatever and the Canada Games kind of came and went, the emotional part of it, before the games. And then with all the rain outs "that's it", it was kind of "oh, well" that's it,



whatever. After that, I just thought it came and went and I'll just move on. I guess I didn't think it would be that way, it would be more of a hype.

--How were your health and energy levels?

010: Good.

--How did you feel physically?

010: Good.

--How did you feel mentally?

010: I felt disappointed in a way. I wasn't "down", but I was kind of, I don't know it just kind of came and went. Things didn't work out, with all the rain, not putting all my energy into something that wasn't worth while, but just "down" I guess.

--Do you feel the present age of the SaskFirst athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

010: No. I think they should make it maybe 17 to 20 would be good. Raise it one more year, and shorten it. 15 to 16, that's kind of a tough age to get started.

--If your training began when you were older (20) do you feel this would have affected whether you would still be competing at an elite level?

010: Yah, 20, 21, 22, you have the mental ability that you can control yourself and your emotions more. You have more experience.

--With that question in mind, what if your training began when you were younger (12)?

010: Yah, I guess that would be a good age, but that 15, 16 age is tough.

--How long have you been out of elite level ball?

010: 1 year.

--Would you have continued playing at an elite level if the SF team could have stayed together?

010: Yah, I think I would.

--Did this have any bearing on your decision to continue at an elite level?

010: I would have continued, well I guess I did.

--Would you have continued at an elite level if you could have still had an elite level coach to play for after the Canada Games?

010: Yep, definitely.

--How important would it be to continue with the same coaches (SF)?

010: That would be a great idea. They know what you are capable of. It would be a great idea.

--Would you have continued to play ball if elite players could stay within close proximity?

010: Yes, I would.

--Did you have an injury or illness that kept you out of elite level ball?

010: No.

--Have you pursued other activities that contributed to your discontinuation at an elite level?

010: Yah, I like my Northern camping, travelling. I have school and work too in the summers.

--After SF was there an elite level ball team available to you?

010: No.

--Is there one now?

010: No.

--Have the following factors contributed to your discontinuation?

Career -- No.

Schooling -- It affects it.

Significant others -- My boyfriend. We like to go camping and stuff.

Money -- No.

Age -- No.

Location of competitive team -- No.

Fun or lack of fun -- No.

--What bearing did being a starter or nonstarter have on your decision to discontinue?

010: No affect.

--What bearing did fundraising have on your decision to discontinue competing at an elite level?

010: None.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

010: I was just, it was more of an individual attitude. It just kind of came and went.

--Did your parents family and friends support you through your training?

010: Yes.

--Are you planning to recenter at an elite level?

010: Yes.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other level?

010: No.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other capacity?

010: No.

--Are you in physical education or some other sports related field?

010: Phys. Ed.

Sum up:

As a pitcher you need the mental capabilities to continue on at an elite level, and I just got tired and burned out. I don't want to say lazy, but it could be in there somewhere. I have carried on with other interests. We both (boyfriend) like to camp and travel together, so significant other has something to do with it.

Recommendations:

If I would've had another program to go into and I think with, not such a club coach to go to after. Not to say that they are not as experienced as the elite coach, but, I think that Shirley was such a technical coach, it was such an asset to the players. All the others helping her, it was a big asset. Not just a single, solo coach.

They also need to scout more small towns. It is also difficult having everyone so far away, it is a hassle being so far away. Small towns have no access,

you are so limited. The small town players don't have the opportunities or the access to training as the city kids. I look back and it was a good training program, physical and mental.

### 011 Transcript

--What is your present age?

011: 25

--Age when began playing softball?

011: 7

--Age when began playing elite ball?

011: 16

--Age when began Sask First?

011: 16

--Age when completed Sask First?

011: 19

Nonstarter

--What levels of ball have you played since completing SaskFirst?

011: Played in Regina for one year and we played in Provincials (A). Then I quit and this year I started again, and I played Senior ladies "B". And That would be it.

--How long have you played ball at any level since completing SF?

011: 2 summers.

--Are you presently competing at an elite level?

011: No.

--Are you planning to recenter?

011: That's a good question. I really haven't considered it. But, I guess, Yes, I would.

--Have you played other sports since SaskFirst?

011: Yes, volleyball -- City

Broomball -- Provincial level

A lot of REC sports.

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

011: Average softball player, I would have to do a fair bit of training to get back into the elite level. Not physical training, but skills training -- a lot.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play elite-level softball immediately after the Canada Games?

011: I didn't want to play anymore. I guess I could've, I felt the skills were there, it was just the desire wasn't there anymore.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the SaskFirst program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

011: Probably, overall, it was quite positive. It was a great opportunity for someone like myself who lived so far away from a major center. There wasn't the resources in the areas of coaching, training and competitive competition...That I received through SaskFirst. That was positive. It was a great opportunity for me to get out a little bit and see what was out there. It was also a lot of traveling.

That was a big problem. I was so sick of driving. Toward the end it just didn't seem worth it.

--If you had a daughter, would you want her to be a part of the SaskFirst program? Why or why not?

011: Definitely. I think its a great opportunity to test yourself and to compete. I am a firm believer that competition is a good thing. And when proposed in the proper environment, of course, not complete and total competition to the death. I think it teaches discipline and comradery and all the good things in life like that. And I really believe that if someone is involved in something and really dedicated to it they will avoid some of the bad things in life.

--How do you perceive the training for the SaskFirst program? Perhaps stressful, routine easy?

011: Easy, yah right what a breeze (JOKE). Actually, once I got into it it was good. Like I said, I had never been exposed to training like that before, so at first it was difficult. The discipline was good. And I think it has become an everyday thing for me now -- the training and things like that. But it started off it was a little bit stressful, but once you get into the routine of learning.

--How many hours per week did you train?

011: Well, on my own about 5-10 hours a week, then you add on ball practice, and games. I played for (Smalltown, Townsville) and SaskFirst all at the same time so it really fluctuated for the amount of time I put into ball.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

011: Not all the time. But I really tried to. Once again, I had never had any training or anything like that, so I took Shirl's training program at face value, it's a good training program.. But, you also had to fit it into your schedulac and sometimes I wasn't able to, but most of the time, yes I did adhere to it.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

011: Volleyball -- high school

Badminton -- high school

Softball on other teams -- provincial level

Broomball -- provincial level

--Did you work while training?

011: I worked at home, like on the farm. It was work, but I just didn't get a pay check.

--Did you at some point attend university during your training?

011: Yes, one year (last year of SaskFirst).

--Did you play university sports?

011: Yes, softball.

--Overall how much time do you feel you had during your 4-year training for academics, friends, family, etc.?

011: I think, like.. the only change I noticed was less time with friendsAt first, I didn't have my license, so I spent more time with them (family)! But, yah, less time with my friends. What I did was so different than what everyone else did. Like on the weekends I would go to camps, and everyone else would go to parties,



so you get new friends. Like the SF players became my friends more so, I don't know if I really had less time for them, or if I just sort-of moved away from them. But like school, yah, I didn't...same amount of stuff for school. Family, I didn't notice a change.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

011: Oh yes, I had a good time.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training (when to train & how often)?

Do you feel you should have had more input, or do you think this was a good set up?

011: Actually, yah I did because I was on my own. So, there really wasn't anybody, like from the team, around so I just did it on my own. I think in a sense of when to do it, the person should have input, to fit it into your life routine, or else you won't do it. I think you should have a great deal of input. The training program that was sent out was good because I didn't know what type of training should be done. I think it is sort of something that needs to be done on an individual basis.

--After completing your training and completion of the Canada Games how did you feel? (List of options)

011: Actually, I didn't really feel.. burned out or stale is so harsh. But, somewhere along those lines. When it was all over I never thought, "Next year, boy, I'm joining the National team." My first thought was, "Good, now I can get back to university and do some other sports." I really wanted to try some other sports and

pursue some other avenues that were there. And mostly it was RELIEF that this is over and I don't have to drive anymore, and things like that. I thought, "This was fun, but I have to grow up and do something...like get a job!" And things like that. Ready to get on with my life is probably the most accurate one.

--How were health and energy levels?

011: Good, I think. I was quite energetic.

--How did you feel physically?

011: Good.

--How did you feel mentally?

011: I felt really good that it was...not done, but that I had stuck with the team. I felt good, a little disappointed in how we finished, but, the main thing -- as much as I enjoyed it -- I thought I have to get on with my education and getting a career. I was more focused on getting my life into order.

--Do you feel the present age of the SF athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

011: Yah, I do. I think actually start a little younger. By the time you are 16 you develop some pretty strong habits. By the time you are that age you are involved in some other things. Where as I think maybe when you start when you are 14 you have the opportunity to teach and to discipline.

--What if your training began when you were 12 years of age?

011: That sounds better, it really does. As long as it...like your not taking kids, like I don't think a 12 year old could've committed as much time, I don't know, they

might have more trouble committing that much time. But if you can get them into it gradually, getting them involved. Oh heck, those little gymnasts do it!

--What if your training began when you were older (say 20 years of age)?

011: I just don't think it would work. I think by the time you are 20 you should be involved in elite sports or it will never work.

--How long have you been out of elite level softball?

011: 5 years.

--Would you have continued playing at an elite-level if the SaskFirst team could have stayed together?

011: No.

--Did this have any bearing on your continuation at an elite level?

011: No.

--Would you have continued at elite-level softball if you could have still had an elite-level coach after the SaskFirst program?

011: If the team would've been -- I started working -- I couldn't take time off work to drive. If there was an elite coach near me, definately I would've stuck with it.

--How important would it to be to continue with the same coaches (SF coaches)?

011: It would've been nice, but it wouldn't have made a difference, unless they were within close proximity.

--Would you have played elite-level ball if elite players could stay within close proximity -- as opposed to being scattered across the province?

011: Yes.

--Did you have an injury or illness that kept you from competing at an elite level?

011: No.

--Have you pursued other activities that contributed to the discontinuation of elite level softball?

011: Once again, just getting on with my life. Where work has taken me is taking me away from ball. I am in areas that don't really have elite ball.

--After SaskFirst was there any elite softball program available for you?

011: No, I would have to travel.

--Is there one now?

011: No.

--Have the following factors contributed to the discontinuation of elite-level summer softball?

Career: Big time.

Schooling: No.

Significant Others: No.

Money: No.

Age: No, not yet.

Location of competitive team: Yes, there is nobody located around here.

fun/lack of fun: I think it was more fun playing competitive team. I wouldn't have quit playing competitive ball thinking it was unfun.

--What bearing did being a starter or nonstarter in the SF program have on your decision to discontinue competing at an elite level?

011: None.

--What bearing did fundraising?

None, wasn't that bad.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

011: A little disappointed about how it ended up. I was also a little sad, cause I knew...I had made some good friends, and we were all going to part ways. So that was kind of disappointing. I also look back on it as being kind of a fun time. Kind of mixed feelings. Disappointment, sadness, happy (not really "happy", a little more "relieved") that it was over.

--Did your parents, family and friends support you in your training?

011: Parents and family did, once again, my friends -- no. The longer the ball went on, the more friends I lost. My friends were slowly cut from the SF program and they had bad feelings about it. Once they got cut, the program sucked, and anyone pursuing it what an idiot. So, very little support from friends, even the ones I went to school with.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other level?

011: Last year I played Intermediate "B".

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other capacity other than a player?

011: No.

--Are you in physical education or some other type of sports related field?

011: No.

--Other than the reasons cited, are there other reasons why you have decided to discontinue competing in softball at an elite level?

011: I guess, I had been playing ball for a long time, and I wanted to try some other things, there just wasn't time. I wanted to play some other sports. I kind of taken school seriously and done well with that, and work and stuff, so. I have been focusing more...softball will always be a fun/recreational sport, but "i've been there, done that" and I felt it was time to move on.

I think maybe burned out is a good word. The desire just wasn't there to compete. Or to pursue it at that level. It's coming back, though, I find. Well, playing this summer, it made me so angry. Right after the game they would want to head to the bar, and I was like, maybe we could practice, here, guys. The all looked at me like I sprouted another head. I found that I am getting the competitive edge back, but it was nice taking some time off.

--Do you have any recommendations for the SaskFirst program to increase continuation of elite-level softball participation?

011: I wish I did. Especially after talking to you I think it is important to continue.

We need, maybe, more elite coaches. More training to get people (rural) involved in elite-level coaching. There is nobody here in this level. I had a really

good opportunity. If somebody was here to show and teach, to get kids into the program, and once they get out to keep them competing at that level.

I think we need more awareness of what to do (to become elite-level coaches). I was really disappointed in the ball this year. I really wanted to play and be competitive, but everyone was more concerned about buying the pitcher of beer afterward. I would like to become a certified/trained coach, but I just don't know who to talk to or what to do to do it.

It would be nice to have a little more information available on what is available and how to go about doing it. People and kids need to be informed of the benefits of being involved in programs like this. I think it would really improve, it needs to be improved.

### 012 Transcript

Age: 25

Age when began playing softball: 8

Age when began playing elite ball: 17

Age when began SF: 17

Age when completed SF: 19

Starter

--What levels of ball have you played since SF?

012: Basically just on city teams.

--How long have you played ball at any level since completing SF?

012: Ever since, so 6 years.

--Are you presently competing at an elite level?

012: No.

--Are you planning to reenter?

012: No.

--Have you played other sports since SF?

012: Volleyball -- college and competitive level.

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

012: I think I could.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play at an elite level immediately after the Canada Games?

012: I was able to, like I could've done it. But I don't know if I really wanted to. I didn't really have the opportunity to.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the SF program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

012: I would say for the most part, positive. The only thing that I didn't really like about it was that it was maybe a bit too rigid. After years at it, I felt we weren't having fun anymore at it.

--If you had a daughter, would you want her to be a part of the SF program?

012: Yes. Because I don't think women take athletics as seriously as men, or are giving those opportunities as readily. I would encourage her, yes.

--How do you perceive the training for the SF program?



012: I would say it was "demanding", but nothing really stressful or anything.

--How many hours per week did you train?

012: 20 hours.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

012: Yes.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

012: Yes. Volleyball -- college

Softball -- college

City softball

Basketball -- H.S.

Volleyball -- H.S.

Track -- H.S.

--Did you work while training?

012: No.

--Did you attend university during your training?

012: Yes.

Played university sports

--Overall how much time do you feel you had during your 4 year training for academics, family, friends, etc.?

012: Not much. I suppose I just focused on school and training. We spent a lot of time on the road travelling between places to train on the weekends, so I was

never really doing things with my friends or my family or stuff in the summer at all. In the winters there was a bit more because we weren't always going on the weekends. I don't regret it, but I wished we would've had more fun at it.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

012: Yah.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training?

012: Yah, I guess so. Those things were pretty flexible, I thought they were.

You could choose what you wanted to do on what day. It's alright, I don't know about input, we were pretty much on our own, so we could choose.

--After completing your training and the completion of the Canada Games how did you feel (LIST)?

012: I'd say, burned out, ready to try something else, uncertain about the future of my participation. I felt empty, like, "What do I do now?" That whole, I don't know. It was kind of a let-down, especially since we didn't do all that great. It was like, why should we have to practice that hard when teams that don't practice that hard walk in and do that much better. Like did it get us anywhere? No, it didn't look like it.

--How were you health and energy levels?

012: OK

--How did you feel physically?

012: Fine.

--How did you feel mentally?

012: Fine too, because I went away (to school).

--Do you feel the present age of the SF athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level?

012: Yah, I think it is appropriate at that level, but I'm not sure in the exact same manner. Or with the same pressures, I don't know there was something about it that was too much like a job. We lost the fun somewhere. I don't exactly know how it needed to be changed. It was too stern, it was like "lighten up." It wasn't the end of the world, we were supposed to be having fun playing ball. There were times when we needed to win we were let to win, rather than having to rotate people in. The things like that, to win, and celebrate, woohoo!! You know, it was like this big brother was watching you. And a lot of people just got so wound up about that. Too serious. It was easier being an out of townner, you could go back home and party with your friends. But I think the team needed to do that together though. Those times to unwind, together.

--If your training began when you were older, say 20, do you feel it would have affected whether you would still be playing at an elite level?

012: I don't think so.

--With that question in mind, what if your training began when you were younger (12)?

012: I don't think so either.

--How long have you been out of elite level ball?

012: Since the Games.

--Would you have continued playing at an elite level if the SF team could have stayed together?

012: Yah, I would've.

--Did this have any bearing on your continuation at an elite level?

012: Probably, because there really aren't the opportunities.

--Would you have continued at elite level ball if you could have still had an elite level coach to play for after the CGs?

012: Yah.

--How important would it be to continue with the same coaches (SF coaches)?

012: Not a deciding factor one way or another.

--Would you have played ball if elite players could have stayed within close proximity?

012: Yah.

--Did you have an injury or illness that kept you from competing at an elite level?

012: I really needed some time off for my arm. I had a lot of tendonitis in my arm and shoulder that really just needed time to heal.

--Have you pursued other activities that contributed to the discontinuation of elite level ball?

012: Yes, competitive volleyball.

--After SF was there any elite softball program available to you?

012: No.

--Is there one now?

012: No.

--How have the following factors contributed to the discontinuation of elite level ball?

Career -- It hasn't, I suppose it has taken me away from elite areas.

Schooling -- No.

Sign. others -- Yah, taken me away and time.

Money -- No.

Age -- I suppose. We were too old, to try out for the National team, or whatever.

Or for the Next Games

Location of team -- I don't know where they are located

Fun or lack of -- I pretty much have decided to not play even lower level ball because I don't even find it fun. I find it kind of boring.

--What bearing did being a starter or nonstarter have on your decision to discontinue?

012: None.

--What bearing did fundraising for a summer team have on your decision to discontinue elite level ball?

012: None.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

012: Burned out.

--Did your parents, family and friends, support you through your training?

012: They were neutral. There were things they didn't like about it and things they did like about it. They were neutral.

Overall, they just tried to keep quiet about it.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other level?

012: City.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other capacity?

012: No

--Are you in physical education or some other type of sports related field?

012: No.

Sum up:

For me, mostly, it was because I moved around a lot and I kind of lost contact with the elite community as far as ball went. Because of the distances I moved. So I really didn't meet anybody or find any elite teams.

Recommendations:

I just think it needed, people needed to laugh more than they ever did. They were so worried about making it or not, or playing, or getting hurt. I don't know if we carried too many people and there was too much competition between us or if it was just we needed to have fun at it sometimes. The training was maybe a bit too much in that, I mean we were younger and stuff and throwing 500 balls from center field. I mean my arm is still growing, let alone being able to keep up with that demand. And it did get sore for a while.

**013 Transcript**

Age: 24

Age when began playing ball: 5

Age whe began playing elite ball: 11

Age when began SaskFirst: 15

Age when completed SaskFirst: 18

Starter

--What levels of ball have you played since completing SF?

013: 1 year Jr. A ball

Coed slow-pitch -- 3 years after that for fun

--How long have you played any type of ball since completing SF?

013: 4 years.

--Are you presently playing elite level softball?

013: No.

--Are you planning to reenter?

013: No.

--Have you played other sports since SaskFirst?

013: Yes. 5 years sr. women's basketball

Coed volleyball

Floor hockey

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

013: I couldn't play it because I have injured my shoulder. I have also found that I am now scared of the ball. I would never make a team now.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play elite level ball immediately after the Canada Games?

013: Definitely, I felt I had less capabilities the 1 year AFTER the Canada Games. That might of had something to do with the coaching in the summer team and the way I was treated. I felt I wasn't as good as I was with the Canada Games. And because I was playing with older more experienced players that year, I wasn't a starter. So that even further lowered my self-esteem.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the SaskFirst program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

013: Positive. I could go on forever. Looking back, that was probably the best times of my life. And not only as far as the training went but friendships and things like that. I had a really positive experience in that program.

--If you had a daughter, would you want her to be a part of the program?

013: Definitely. Because of the great experience I got from it, I would hope she would have the same.

--How do you perceive the training for SaskFirst?

013: I would say the camps were adequate, we did what we needed to do. On our own, I feel we should have been pushed more because we were so spread around, I ended up doing nothing, basically. Like when we were given a program, I would try it for the first week or two. But I had no one there pushing me, and so I would



quit. If there was some way you could meet with the other girls in the area, although in high school you are pretty busy, then work out together, I think that would've helped.

--How many hours per week did you train?

013: Well, you see I was playing high school sports as well. So if I had a game or practice, I wouldn't do the training that day because I would be so worn out as it was. For SF specifically, if I did 1 hour a week that would be good for me.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

013: No. Although, now I remember I did do more than 1 hour a week, especially the last summer when we weren't allowed to play club ball. I would not do the running, and weights, but I would go out and do ground balls and practice hitting and stuff. So I would've done about 5 hours a week.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

013: Yes. High school basketball

High school volleyball

Played competitive softball

--Did you work while training?

013: Yes.

--Did you at some point attend university during your training?

013: No.

Did not play university sports.

--Overall how much time do you feel you had during your 4 year training for academics, friends, family?

013: I always had time for friends. I know my relatives didn't see me much over those years because there would be a lot of functions on weekends and we would have camps. An academics, there was lots of time for academics.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

013: Oh yes.

--Did you have much input in your training, was this a good set up?

013: Actually, I think that was a little rigid. I feel we trained enough, but I think we should have been allowed to miss...like I think the only weekend I missed was when my Gramma died. I think you almost burn out. Like I remember people could go, and I couldn't go to weddings and things like that because it wasn't a good enough excuse to get out of the weekend. So I think we should have been allowed a little lee-way on that.

I think it was a good set up, but I though we needed more nutritional guidelines.

--After completing your training and completion of the Canada Games how did you feel?

(LIST)

013: Ready to try something else.

Ready to get on with my life.

As soon as the Canada Games was finished I had like a week of summer and then I was going to start university. So I didn't really. At first I was sad because it was over, but that didn't last too long at that time because I was anxious to get started with university.

--How were your health and energy levels?

013: Great.

--How did you feel physically?

013: Great.

--How did you feel mentally?

013: I was sad that it was the end of a chapter. But I felt fine.

--Do you feel the present age of the SaskFirst athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

013: Yes. Any older you're running into university and that can be very demanding. Any younger, I don't think they would be interested in that kind of training.

--If your training began when you were older (20) do you think it would have affected whether or not you would still be playing?

013: I don't think so. I could be married.

--How about if your training began when you were younger (12)?

013: I think I wouldn't have enjoyed it. It would be too constrained and you're just a kid.

--How long have you been out of elite softball?

013: 5 years.

--Would you have continued playing at an elite level if the SF team could have stayed together?

013: Yes.

--Did this have any bearing on your decision to continue at an elite level?

013: Yes, very much so. When I tried one year without the SaskFirst team, it was a totally different experience which I didn't enjoy. When you are with the SaskFirst team, you are with the same people, with the same coach for years, I don't know, like it's comfortable for you. Because it was such a positive experience, moving to a different team where I didn't know my role, I didn't know if the coaching techniques, that what's her name had. And just the different people, I found it was very cliché at the sr. women's level. And my role changed from a starter to a non starter. There were just so many changes that it was a negative experience for me.

--Would you have continued to play at an elite level if you would have had an elite level coach after the Canada Games?

013: Well, she was supposed to be. I think, wasn't she? It didn't really have a bearing. She was considered an elite level coach.

--How important would it be to continue with the same coaches (SF)?

013: Very important because the same structure is going to be there.

--Would you have played elite level ball if elite players could stay within close proximity -- as opposed to being scattered across the province?

013: Well, I did play with a lot of the girls, they moved to Saskatoon. So, I guess no.

--Did you have an injury that prevented you from playing at an elite level?

013: Yes. I had a shoulder injury, and I tried to play with it for one year after that.

--Have you pursued other activities that prevented you from continuing at an elite level?

013: Does a boyfriend count? Yah, I got a boyfriend after that first year out. He lived out of town and the only time I would be able to see him was on weekends, but we had tournaments. I'd rather spend time with him than being in that negative situation.

--After SaskFirst was there a comp. team available for you?

013: Yes.

--Is there one now?

013: Yes.

--Have the following factors contributed to your discontinuation?

013: Career: Yes, I was sick of not being able to get a full-time job.

Schooling: Not a factor.

Significant other: Yes, I got a boyfriend.

Money: Not a factor.

Age: No.

Location of competitive team: No.

Fun or lack of fun: Definitely lack of fun.

--What bearing did being a starter or nonstarter have on your decision to stop playing?

013: That was a factor, because I was no longer a starter (for summer) and that was an adjustment. But near the end I wasn't having fun and didn't want to be there anyway. (Summer) But I think initially that bothered me.

--What bearing did fundraising have on your decision to discontinue elite ball?

013: None, no bearing.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

013: Depressed, a little. I think about it now and I kind of become depressed because I wish I was still in that situation.

--Did your parents, family and friends support you in your training?

013: Oh, yes!

--Are you presently involved in the sport at some other level?

013: Coed slowpitch

--Are you presently involved in softball in some other capacity?

013: I have been in the past (instructor, clinics).

--Are you in physical education or some other sports related field?

013: I have half a P.E. degree, I am now in graduate school in nutrition.

Sum up:

013: Like I said before, softball was such a positive experience and to go from that to sr. ladies was just such a change. And not a positive change for me. I

stopped having fun, and I couldn't be bothered with it again. It will never be the same.

Recommendations:

I don't know what they do now, I don't know how much it has changed, if they could've had more of a, some-sort of a relationship between SaskFirst and the sr. women's. Because they are both high caliber ball. And so, especially if you could continue to play (club), so you aren't in such a sheltered world with SF and then going to a whole different system therefore, it would make the whole transition a little easier. And the for, the training could be a little more structured, somehow, I think we could've been in a lot better shape than we were.

**014 Transcript**

Age: 24

Age when playing softball: 10

Age when began playing elite level softball: 12

Age when began SaskFirst: 15

Age when completed SaskFirst: 18

Starter

--What levels of ball have you played since completing SaskFirst?

014: Provincial "A"

Jr. National Team

--How long have you played softball at any level since SaskFirst?

014: 3 years.

--Are you presently competing at an elite level?

014: No.

--Are you planning to reenter at an elite level?

014: I would if we moved.

--Have you played other sports since SaskFirst?

014: Slowpitch, but I don't know if you can call that a sport.

I don't really think that is a sport.

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

014: I'm really not sure. I have thought about that because Nationals are in Saskatoon this year and I would be interested in playing. There might be a chance that (my husband) might get transferred back and I thought about it. I don't know it's kind of scary. It has been 4 years, and I don't know.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play elite level softball immediately after the Canada Games?

014: I thought I was capable.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the SaskFirst program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

014: Positive. I think that, maybe more psychologically, understanding that aspect of the game, more so than maybe the physical. I think I had good coaching previously, but more of the mental aspect.



--If you had a daughter would you want her to be a part of the SaskFirst program?

014: Yes, I think it was a positive experience for me, and I would be proud to have her on the team. I don't think there was anything negative about the way the training or the preparation was done. The outcome wasn't the greatest. I think that overall it was a good program.

--How do you perceive the training for the SaskFirst program?

014: I can't say too much about that because I didn't do it, which I think we all know. I think it would've been really hard if I would've done it because it looked hard! (JOKE)

--How many hours per week did you train?

014: In-season about 2 hours a day, off-season not a whole lot.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

014: I don't think so.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

014: Yes. High school volleyball

High school track

Softball -- Prov. "A"

--Did you work while training?

014: No.

--Did you attend university during your training?

014: No.

Did not play university sports.

--Overall how much time do you feel you had during your training for academics, friends, family, etc.?

014: Adequate time.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

014: Yah, I think so.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training, was this a good set up?

014: Again, in-season I think I basically decided what I wanted to do and when, except when it came to camps on weekends. Other than that, I basically dictated what I wanted to do.

I don't know if this was a good set up, I didn't look at it.

--After completing your training and the completion of the Canada Games how did you feel (LIST)?

014: I think maybe a bit burned out, maybe a bit disappointed in our end result. Basically I thought we had a good tournament. I felt we had a good team going into the tournament, I felt that I was prepared. It didn't seem like it was meant to be, we didn't get any breaks. It was disheartening and I really questioned whether or not I wanted to play. At the time. But when the time came around to play again, I was ready to play. At the time I was very bitter.

--How were your health and energy levels?

014: I remember I was injured. I think I was just, I hated the world, hated softball, hated the world, and I hated myself. I think I was just thoroughly disgusted with the outcome and putting it into perspective. Our finish, 5th or 6th

just was acceptable. It didn't feel like I accomplished what I wanted to accomplish.

--How did you feel physically?

014: I can't really remember, probably drained.

--How did you feel mentally?

014: Deflated. I really think, I remember a room at the venue in the t.v. room, it was after something, some game that said "You were going no where" and I remember totally freaking out, I don't know, losing it.

--Do you feel the present age of the SaskFirst athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

014: Yes.

--If your training began when you were 20 do you feel this would have any affect on whether you would still be competing at an elite level?

014: I'm not sure. I think I still would be.

--With that question in mind, what if you began SF when you were 12?

014: It's too young.

--How long have you been out of elite level ball?

014: 3 years.

--Would you have continued playing at an elite level if the SaskFirst team could have stayed together?

014: Yah, if I would've been there I would've, for sure.

--Did this have any bearing on you continuing at an elite level?

014: No.

--Would you have continued playing at elite level of ball if you could have had an elite level coach to play for after the Canada Games?

014: I think yah, I could've if I did.

--How important would it be to continue with the smae coaches, the SF coaches?

014: Not that important.

--Would you have played elite level ball if elite players could stay within close proximity as opposed to being scattered across the province?

014: Yes, for sure.

--Did you have an injury or illness that kept you from competing at an elite level?

014: No.

--Have you pursued other activities that contributed to the discontinuation of elite level softball?

014: Yah, moving!

--After SaskFirst was there any elite team available for you?

014: Yes

--Is there one now?

014: No.

--Have the following factors contributed to the discontinuation of elite level softball?

Career -- Not.

Schooling -- Not.

Significant Others -- Yes, My husband gets transferred. So if I was going to play ball it would be garbage ball, because that is all that's around here.

Money -- No.

Age -- No.

Location of the Comp. team -- Yes, there is nothing around here.

Fun or lack of fun -- No.

--What bearing did being a starter or nonstarter have on your decision to discontinue?

014: None

--What bearing did fundraising for an elite team have on your decision to discontinue competing?

014: None.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

014: I think I felt like there was probably additional things that I could have done that would have prepared me better and even though the tools were there for me to use I didn't take advantage of all I could have. Maybe that would have been the edge, and if everyone would have done the same thing it could have helped us out. I think overall, I felt definitely disappointed in our performance and maybe wished I would have done something more.

--Did your parents family and friends support you through your training?

014: Yes.

--Are you planning to reenter softball at an elite level?

014: I'm planning to, (my husband) hopefully will be transferred back to Calgary or Saskatoon.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other level?

014: No, well, I have played slow pitch. But I don't think that counts.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other capacity?

014: No, I'm not.

--Are you in physical education or some other sports related field?

014: No.

Recommendations:

I think for a lot of people there comes a time when your life can't revolve around softball. You have to get a job, you meet a man (that takes you away from your friends and everything else) (JOKE).

I think also for some people, but not myself, I never regretted any of the lost weekends or any of the time I spent. But I think for some, if you are not in the starting line up and you put in all the time and doing all the practicing and you are there all the time. And then it comes game time and you're not playing -- I know that would bother me. I think maybe there comes a time when it is not a high priority anymore. You like feel you are missing out on other things, like going to the lake or whatever or whatever people do.

I think both Saskatoon and Regina are losing great players, and the overall caliber of senior "A" ball in general is really, obviously gone down hill. The ball is

brutal. When I think of "A" ball I think of the Lashburn Bluebirds and Harmony Center, I don't think of the Lorne's Lazars or the Regina Impala "A"s. To me that isn't "A" ball.

The most disappointing part is we had some talent and if we would have stuck it out together, like for 5 years or to the ages we are now, we could've been the team to beat. I think that is the hardest part.

### 015 Transcript

Age: 19

Age when began playing softball: 6

Age when began playing elite ball: 13

Age when began SF: 13

Age when completed SF: 16

Nonstarter

--What levels of ball have you played since completing the SF program?

015: Midget "A", college, Jr. National team.

--How long have you played ball at any level since completing the SF program?

015: 3 years.

--Are you presently competing at an elite level of ball?

015: Yes.

Are you planning to reenter?

015: I'm not sure.

--Have you played other sports since SF?

015: Yes. Rec golf.

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

015: I see them average, not above, just plain average.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play elite level ball immediately after the CGs?

015: I think they were higher than what they are present, now.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the SF program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

015: I had positives and negatives, but the positives definitely outweigh the negatives by far. I would say positive. I got to play with some of the best players in the Province, and competing at an elite level and getting to know the people. The negatives would be when it's all done, that's the end of it. There is no more, the team pretty much dissolves after that.

--If you had a daughter, would you want her to be a part of the SF program?

015: Yes I would. I think it is a great experience to expose you to what there is out there in the field. It let's you see what else is out there.

--How do you perceive the training for the SF program?

015: Well it's not stressful or easy. It took time and commitment, but it wasn't easy and it wasn't hard. It was good to get you dedicated.

--How many hours per week did you train?



015: About 12 hours a week.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

015: Yes.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

015: Yes. Volleyball -- HS

Softball -- ladies league C or D

Badminton -- HS

--Did you work while training?

015: No.

--Did you play university sports?

015: Yes.

--Overall how much time do you feel you had for academics, friends, family, etc.?

015: I think that if you managed your time well I had lots of time. Well, not "lots", but enough.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

015: Yes.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training?

015: Yah, there was flexibility, I felt. Like, I don't know, if you had a volleyball game that was your program for that night. I think it was a good set up.

--After completing your training and completion of the CGs how did you feel (LIST)?

015: Uncertain about the future of my participation. Uncertain in that I didn't know where I was going to be going for, I figured I would continue playing, but I didn't know if it would still be at an elite level or just ball around my hometown which was not elite. Hard to try and get into another team after playing for 3 and-a-half years with those people. I found it hard to be able to adjust to other coaches' perspectives, and even the way you play, like strategies some people have.

--How were your health and energy levels?

015: Good.

--How did you feel physically?

015: I felt a bit drained after the actual Games, but after a few days, I felt fine again.

How did you feel mentally after the CGs?

015: Happy about the result, mixed feelings about the result. And definitely disappointed in that I figured we would never have the chance to play together again as a team, all at once.

--Do you feel the present age of the SF athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

015: Yes.

--If your training began when you were older (20) do you feel it would've affected whether you would still be competing at an elite level?

015: I wouldn't be able to put as much into it, you'd have to go out and get a job.

I don't know.

--With that question in mind, what if your training began when you were 12?

015: It is kind of stressful on you when you are so young, you are just starting to grow up. But I think if you are going to compete at an elite level you have to start young, that is all there is to it.

--Do you feel being a starter or nonstarter had any bearing on your decision to continue to play at an elite level?

015: No.

--Have you played elite level softball since completing the SF program?

015: Yes.

--Has there been a time when you did not compete at an elite level?!

015: No, I have played at an elite level and play on weekends at a non-elite team.

--Did your parents, family and friends support you through your training?

015: Yes.

--How important was it to you to play with the SF athletes after the CGs?

015: It was important.

--How important was it to you to have an elite level coach to play for after the Canada Games?

015: It was very important.

--Do you have to travel to a team to be able to play elite level ball?

015: Yes. It's not very good.

--Have the following factors contributed to the continuation of elite level summer softball?

Career -- No.

Schooling -- No.

Sig other -- No, I just love the game.

Money -- No.

Age -- No.

Location of the comp. team -- No, but it is getting harder since I have to travel to play.

Fun or lack of -- I enjoyed playing since Sf is finished. I think I have looked at it differently, knowing that the SF coaches were great coaches and I don't think that I could ask for any better coaches, it is hard to measure up to what they were.

--How long do you foresee playing at an elite level?

015: A couple years.

--How do you feel about playing on another team with players other than SF players?

015: Hard to adjust to it, after playing at an elite level and then going back to my club team where everyone is, the "fun" is the main part, not getting better and winning, not the same goals as in an elite level. It is hard to swallow sometimes.

--How do you feel about playing on another team with coaches other than SF coaches?

015: I find it very hard. I have really high expectations of my coaches now to get everyone motivated to play and to play for all the same reasons. It is tough.

--What reasons do you contribute to your continuation of elite level softball?

015: I didn't want to drop it completely because I have put too much work into it now. And playing at an elite level was one of my options, the other option was at a recreational level and I didn't think at this time in my life I was ready for a recreational team. I think I still have a couple years of elite level softball in me.

--How did you feel after the CGs and the whole training process?

015: It was a great experience, and I would do it again in a minute.

--Are you presently in the sport in some other capacity other than a player?

015: I help coach a pee wee team

--Are you in P.E. or some other sports related field?

015: Yes. Rec and community services.

Recommendations:

It is so hard to go back to a team that is "average" after you have been on an exceptional team. There is no way you can keep the team together with the players all over the Province, that is just not feasible. So, I don't know what could happen. You need to make the transition from SF smoother. Rather than a step down to summer ball, make it equal or better than SF.

Just from my location, there is not enough people in my area to compete at even a "B" level. It is hard to even get a competitive "B" level, it is hard to keep their interest up and motivated to play every year. We had a fairly decent team, we

went to the Summer Games. As we got older, they wanted to go out, and didn't want to be as committed. I think their values just change. It is hard to keep people committed to even go to a tournament. Being in the lower part of the Province we have to travel so far to compete. Our location didn't help matters.

**017 Transcript**

Age: 21

Age when began playing softball: 8

Age when began playing elite level softball: 11

Age when began SaskFirst: 16

Age when completed SaskFirst: 19

Starter

--What levels of softball have you played since completing SaskFirst?

017: College NAIA

Summer Jr. A all years

--How long have you played ball at any level since completing SaskFirst?

017: 3 years.

--Are you presently competing at an elite level of softball?

017: Yes.

--Are you planning to reenter?

017: Yes.

--Have you played other sports since SaskFirst?

017: Volleyball -- elite

--How do you perceive your ability and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

017: Good.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

017: Good and bad. I had a shoulder problem that bothered me, that would be the only reason I would say no.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the SaskFirst program positive, negative mixed or indifferent?

017: Positive. I learned a lot of strategy and stuff like that. Not just skills alone, a lot of mental stuff. Team unity and stuff like that. A lot of pitching stuff. Kind of worked as a team and stuff. It was positive.

--If you had a daughter would you want her to be a part of SF?

017: If she wanted to play, I would say yah. I would like her to, but if she didn't want to, then that's ok. I would want her to play for the same reasons as before.

--How do you perceive the training for the SF program?

017: Well, it wasn't easy. Took a lot of time. You had to do that and you had to practice, and play with your team. So it took a lot of time, but I think it helped a lot.

--How many hours per week did you train?

017: Camps were about 6 hours, 2 games a week, couple practices, and I pitched for about an hour every other day. So about 14 hours.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

017: Yah and no. Most of the time, yah. Some times I would change it.

Sometimes it was a little difficult. I don't know, during the SaskFirst program I wasn't all that dedicated, so I found it hard to flow the training and whatnot. I'm sure she knew, a lot of us didn't follow it. But most of us did our own thing to make sure we stayed in shape. The training was very difficult to follow.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

017: Yes. High school volleyball

College volleyball

Ringette -- city

Club softball

--Did you work while training?

017: No.

--Did you at some point attend university during your training?

017: Yes.

--Did you play university sports?

017: Yes, volleyball and softball.

--Overall how much time do you feel you had during your 4 year training for friends, academics, family?

017: During the summer, very little. Like I could never work. And then toward the end of the school year it would be very hard. I am from a small town so I would have to travel a lot, the camps would be in Regina or Saskatoon. Took alot



of time. I missed a lot. It was just understand that it was part of the program, she told us that right away. I don't regret it, not after going to the Canada Games and doing well.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

017: A little, I just missed a lot through high school. Not so much in college, because I missed a lot of camps because I went away to college.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training, was this a good set up?

017: Yah, because like I said, we didn't follow the schedule like we were supposed to so we did a lot, like we just decided we would train ourselves.

I think she did a very good job, though. It was a good set up.

--After completing your training and the completion of the Canada Games how did you feel? (LIST)

017: Positive about continuing to play at an elite level -- Yes.

Ready to prepare for National Team opp -- Yes.

Burned out or stale -- Yes.

Ready to try something else -- Yes.

Ready to get on with your life -- Yes, but I still wanted to play

Uncertain about the future of your participation -- No.

I was kind of relieved that SaskFirst was over. Toward the end there was a lot of stress between the players and the coaches. I guess that was a team thing, not too many people know about it.

--How were your health and energy levels?

017: Very shitty.

--How did you feel physically?

017: Worn out. I had a shoulder problem and an achilles problem.

--How did you feel mentally?

017: Not very good, I had a collision with one of the coaches.

--Do you feel the present age of the SaskFirst athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

017: Yes.

--If your training began when you were older (20), do you think this would have affected whether or not you would still be playing?

017: Yah, I probably would've quit right after that.

--What if your training began when you were 12 years of age?

017: Too young, they wouldn't have taken it seriously enough. I mean when we started we were young enough, even then we didn't take it seriously enough.

--Do you feel being a starter on the SaskFirst team had any bearing on your decision to continue to play at an elite level?

017: No, I was a last minute starter.

--Have you played elite level ball since completing the SaskFirst program?

017: Yes.

--Has there been a time when you did not compete at an elite level of ball?

017: I played with the ladies league in Prince Albert for a summer and I was just disgusted by it. It was pathetic, pretty much. I mean when you are the best player in the league it sort of stinks.

--Did your parents, family and friends support you through your training?

017: Yah. My friends were a little ripped off that I could never hang out and stuff, but they were alright with it.

--How important was it to you to play with the SF players after the Canada Games?

017: I don't think it mattered, but I would've liked it.

--How important was it to you to play for an elite level coach after the Canada Games?

017: It wouldn't have mattered, I really came out of SaskFirst with a lot of knowledge. My coach just says do what you need to do to be good. I am so used to people picking at everything you do, and I grew to like that, and he doesn't do that.

--Do you have to travel to a team to be able to play elite ball?

017: Yes, and I hate it. But that is the only way I could continue to play.

--Have the following factors contributed to the continuation of elite level ball?

Career -- No bearing.

Schooling -- Helped to continue, I got a scholarship.

Money -- That kind of sucked, I could never work.

Significant others -- My Dad, he was my coach, he taught me.

Age -- No bearing.

Location of competitive team -- No bearing.

Fun or lack of fun -- There was no lack of fun.

--How long do you foresee playing softball at an elite level?

017: I will play in Saskatoon for 1 year, that may be my last year, unless I play senior "A", but it depends on what kind of job I get.

--How do you feel about playing on a team with players other than SF players?

017: Fine. At first, coming off the SaskFirst team, it was a little hard to adapt to the other players. You know, working with girls with really high skill levels, it was really hard to play with people who didn't know a lot about the game. You were so used to playing with someone who knew it inside out.

--How do you feel about playing with coaches other than SF coaches?

017: Fine, just fine.

--What reasons do you contribute your continuation of elite ball?

017: It would feel funny not to play, it is a part of my life.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

017: Good. They kind of became a family, the girls did anyway. It was kind of hard to say goodbye, or whatever. Overall, I learned a lot from them and from the coaches, and from playing other teams. In the Canada Games we had to come back from the "B" side and it took a lot of energy and togetherness and whatever. We had it and that was great, it was great. Yah, I learned a lot from SaskFirst.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other capacity other than a player?

017: I help other teams (instructor).

--Are you in physical education or some other sports related field?

017: Phys. Ed.

Recommendations:

I think it is because when you are playing for SaskFirst for those four years, they really drill you. And it really burns you out. And when you are done it is like "Oh, thank God." But, and a lot of the girls don't see an opportunity to play any more and even if they did, they wouldn't want it because they do not want to work that way anymore.

I don't think you can really change that. At the age when we start SaskFirst you really need to give them a program. You can't just say "Train on your own", because that wouldn't happen. But I don't know. I'm not sure.

### 018 Transcript

Age: 21

Age when began playing softball: 10

Age when began playing elite ball: 19

Age when began SaskFirst: 14

Age when completed SaskFirst: 18

Starter

--What levels of ball have you played since completing the SaskFirst program?

018: "A" ball and A-B ball in Moose Jaw

--How long have you played ball at any level since completing the SF program?

018: 3 years.

--Are you presently competing at an elite level in softball?

018: Yes.

--Are you planning to reenter?

018: I hope so.

--Have you played other sports since SaskFirst?

018: Curling and volleyball on college teams.

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

018: I still think I could, and I pretty much have been for the last few years. I don't know if I'd be quite as good as I was when I was playing everyday.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play elite level ball immediately after the Canada Games?

018: I could right after, not a problem. Right after the games, I play down here.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the SaskFirst program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

018: Positive. I had to work pretty hard because I didn't get the high level of ball that everybody else is playing, so I had to work a lot on my own. On my batting, and even my skills I would take my brother out to the diamond. I think, just all the hard work I did by myself and on my own time. I learned a lot and being on your

own and not being around your parents it makes you grow up a little. I know Shirley was kind of strict, if you did anything stupid, you were, you know. It made me grow up a lot. Watch my actions, watch what I did in public and stuff.

--If you had a daughter, would you want her to be a part of the SF program?

018: I think so, I would. Just because I think it is a great program. I was on the Team Sask hockey team and it was horrible. I would never let her go through that. But the softball program I would.

--How do you perceive the training for the SF program?

018: It was stressful at times, especially the first few years. Either you do it or you get cut. But I don't think it was easy, and I don't think it was really hard. You just did what you were told to and did your best. Pretty much fine.

--How many hours per week did you train?

018: Maybe 8 to 10 hours a week. The last year, lots, maybe 15 hours per week.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

018: Yah, not all of it. Some of the things you were like, "I don't want to do it." You didn't always do it, like all the time, but I made sure I did it once in a while.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

018: Yes. Volleyball -- High school

Badminton -- High school

Curling -- High school

Track -- High school

Softball -- "C" level

--Did you work while training?

018: No.

--Did you at some point attend University during your training?

018: No.

Did not play university sports, but is now.

--Overall, how much time do you feel you had during your training for family friends, academics, etc.?

018: I had a fair amount. You know when you were going to be gone, so you kind of had to make time when you do have time. But there was definitely enough time for family and get your school work done and everything.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

018: Oh, yah.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training, was this a good set up?

018: Oh yah. I thought it was pretty good.

--After completing your training and the completion of the Canada Games how did you feel (LIST)?

Positive about continuing to play at an elite level

Uncertain about the future of my participation, like I wondered if I'd get on a team.

I kind of wondered if I'd every play that kind of ball. Cause, I found all the teams, we were so busy. Like the city teams, if I wanted to get on a city team, I couldn't get on a city team before that. When I got to junior, if I wanted to do that, I didn't think I'd have a position because they have already made their teams.



--How were your health and energy levels?

018: Fine.

--How did you feel physically?

018: Good.

--How did you feel mentally?

018: Fine.

--Do you feel the present age of the SaskFirst players is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

018: Yah I do.

--If your training began when you were older (20) do you feel it would have affected whether or not you would still be competing at an elite level?

018: Probably, I don't know.

--With that question in mind, what if your training began when you were younger (12)?

018: It could, just because you would have been playing, it could go either way, actually. You could play longer. Maybe if you started at an earlier age, you would quit earlier, you'd just drop it. I know some people got sick of it. It depends on the person.

--Do you feel being a starter or non starter had any bearing on your decision to continue to play at an elite level?

018: Oh, no.

--Have you played elite level ball since completing the SaskFirst program?

018: Yes.

--Has there been a time when you did not compete at an elite level since SF?

018: No.

--Did your parents, family and friends support you through your training?

018: Yes.

--How important was it to you to play with SaskFirst athletes after the Canada Games?

018: I would've like to, at least a few of them. It's kind of difficult. It would've been nice though, I think our team got along really well, and we enjoyed playing with one another. It would have been nice.

--How important was it to you to have an elite level coach to play for after the Canada Games?

018: I think after that it is kind of important because you learn so much and if you get a coach that doesn't know as much as you have learned, it is kind of difficult for you to play on the same level when they don't know as much about the game as much as you learned in your four years about the game.

--Do you have to travel to a team to be able to play elite level ball?

018: If I was at home I would. (She is now at university). Last summer I played in Moose Jaw, and I had to travel to it. Some days I didn't want to cause I worked all day and I was too tired to drive, like, an hour and a half to get there, play the game, and drive back. Basically go to bed and get up for work the next day. It was worth it though, I love the sport. I don't mind travelling.

--Have the following factors contributed to the continuation of elite level summer softball?

Career -- It is a little more difficult. When you play at an elite level, you HAVE to practice.

Schooling -- I got a scholarship so I can go to school and play.

Significant others--No.

Money -- No.

Age -- No.

Location of the competitive team -- Yah, it restricts you where you can play. Like with work, you can't be travelling all the time. So you have to get a team that is fairly close.

Fun/Lack of -- I have had nothing but fun. It makes you want to keep playing.

--How long do you foresee playing softball at an elite level?

018: Hopefully another couple years, anyway.

--How do you feel about playing on another team with players other than SF players?

018: Fine.

--How do you feel about playing on another team with coaches other than SF coaches?

018: Fine.

--What reasons do you contribute to your continuation of elite level softball?

018: Now, it's the level of competition that I like playing at, it is more exciting than "C" that I used to. The athletes' out that the elite level has, it challenges you, it challenges your ability and your skills.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

018: Hard to believe it was all over in one week. And it came pretty quick. It was kind of sad that you knew you weren't going to play with the girls any more. And that you didn't know what you were going to do because, it was kind of sad, but you were glad you went through it at the same time. I don't know. Not knowing what you were going to do afterwards. Not knowing if you were going to find a team to play for or with, or whether to play or just quit. Or if you would ever play with the same girls again. For me it was up in the air. I didn't know where I would go or what I would do.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other capacity other than a player?

018: No.

--Are you in Phys. Ed or other sports related field?

018: No.

Recommendations:

I just found that there weren't any teams. Like there aren't a lot of elite teams in Saskatchewan, lot for the junior level. Like, I know they have the Lazars in Saskatoon. Our team in Moose Jaw was supposed to be in there, but it didn't work out. By the time I get back from school the teams have already been picked,

so I didn't get to play. So you just have to find a team that will take you. I don't know really. It is just too bad that we couldn't get all the girls back together, I know a lot of the girls don't have the time. I think their goal for 4 years was the Canada Games, and that goal was over and I think no one else really had another goal. The Canada Games were over and "Well, that was it."

### 019 Transcript

This is what was said as we set up an interview date:

019: I am still playing Provincial "A" ball, but I hate it. It is different than Sask First. I didn't like the players (in "A") or the coaches. They are just different. It is like a bad relationship -- you keep hoping it will be better, so you keep going back each year -- and each year it is the same thing.

Age: 20

Age when began playing softball: 5

Age when began playing elite softball: 13

Age when began SF: 14

Age when completed SF: 18

Starter

--What levels of softball have you played since completing the Sask First program?

019: 1 year of midget "A"

1 year of Jr. "A"

--How long have you played ball at any level since completing SF?

019: 2 years.

--Are you presently competing at an elite level in softball?

019: Yes.

--Have you played other sports since SF?

019: Yes, but just rec volleyball, basketball and ringette.

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

019: As far as my ability, I think I hold my own.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play elite level ball immediately after the Canada Games?

019: I don't think I wanted to after the SF program. It was pretty demanding, like we were gone every weekend, we were training a lot. And that was 4 years of training and it was a lot. You missed out a lot of high school if your friends weren't involved in the SF program. And I think I just thought that's as high as I am going to go in softball that I am going to go. I think I had the skill though, but I would have to keep training.

--Would you consider your training and the participation in the SF program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

019: Positive. It wasn't just all about softball skills, it was about just how you carry yourself, how you deal with certain things. There are just some things that are out of your control. And those aren't the things you need to worry about. Just social skills, you know. Just gave a lot more respect to people, coaches, officials, just everyone.

--If you had a daughter, would you want her to be a part of the SF program?

019: Yah, for the same reasons. It is more than just softball. I would explain that it is a big time commitment and that it does take away from other aspects, if your friends aren't in it. My friends weren't in it so it kind of separated me from that.

--How do you perceive the training for the SF program?

019: Well, it wasn't easy, there was a lot of physical training. At times I found it was stressful because I felt I was the only one doing it. I found that really frustrating.

--How many hours per week did you train?

019: 20-30 hours per week.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

019: Yes.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

019: For the first few years I did, but the last year I didn't. I played high school volleyball, basketball, and ringette.

--Did you work while training?

019: Yes.

--Did you attend university?

019: No.

Did not play university sports.

Overall, how much time do you feel you had during your 4-year training for academics, family and friends?

019: Well it was definitely cut back, because I really felt I missed out on a lot of my high school years. I know, even at our graduation, you know, everyone goes out to a party after. Well, we were flying off to Colorado to go to a tournament. At the same time, I had experiences in Colorado and on the trip they will never have. But I don't have as many memories of grade 12 and in high school that these guys will have and it kind of separated me from the big crowd that we hung out with in high school.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

019: Yah, I would say so. At the time it didn't bother me, I knew I was missing out, but it is more now that I look back on it. But I would never change anything, there's no way I would never NOT go back into the SF program.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training, is this a good set up?

019: A lot of the times I felt the training programs were just a bunch of handouts stapled together and given to us. There wasn't any feedback on whether we were doing them or not. There wasn't any kind of interaction, it was just kind of given to you. I don't know I found it to be a little too vague.

I guess it was a good set up because it allowed you to fit it into your own schedule. But at the same time I felt it to be a little too ambiguous. Like a wind-sprint program in the middle of winter, it was hard to decide where exactly you should do this.



--After completing your training and the completion of the Canada Games, how did you feel (LIST)?

019: Burned out and uncertain about the future of my participation.

--How were your health and energy levels?

019: Good, fairly high.

--How did you feel physically?

019: Fine.

--How did you feel mentally?

019: I don't really know.

--Do you feel the present age of the SF athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

019: Yes.

--If your training began when you were older (20), do you feel it would have affected whether or not you would still be competing at an elite level?

019: Probably. If I was in SF, I would still be playing.

--What if your training began when you were 12?

019: I don't know.

--Do you feel being a starter or nonstarter for Sask First had any bearing on your decision to continue to play at an elite level?

019: Not really.

--Have you played elite softball since completing the Sask First program?

019: Yes.

--Has there been a time when you did not compete at an elite level in softball since SF?

019: No.

--Did your parents, family and friends support you through your training?

019: Yep.

--How important was it to you to play with the SF athletes after the Canada Games?

019: It wasn't because most of them lived in Regina, and I wasn't moving to Regina. They all had plans to do something else.

--How important was it to you to have an elite level coach to play for after SF?

019: It was, because we had really good coaches for SF, and anybody who's not quite as good, or does everything, has weaknesses it is just highlighted by a coach that is so good, then going to someone that is not quite as good.

--How do you feel about playing with players other than SF players?

019: The reasons for players to play on club teams is so different than players on SF. Most of them are just out there to have fun, or their parents have them there to keep them out of trouble. Any little trouble on your club team was wiped away when you went on weekends to train. Everyone was there for the same reasons. And when you went back, something was always wrong there. You always had SF to count on, and now, without SF, there are always problems that are there. We always said, "What are we going to do when the SF team isn't here?" We all had the same reasons for being there, on a club team it's not that way.

--Do you have to travel to a team to be able to play elite level ball?

019: No.

--Have the following factors contributed to the continuation of elite level ball?

019: Career--No.

School--No.

Sign. Others--Yah, there are certain people that I automatically relate to ball, certain people I play with.

Money--Yah, that is one of the reasons I am thinking about not playing.

Age--No.

Location of Competitive team--If I had to travel, I wouldn't do it.

Fun or Lack of Fun--No.

--How long do you foresee playing ball at an elite level?

019: For the next couple years.

--How do you feel about playing on another team with coaches other than SF coaches?

019: I really grew to like the SF coaches, just the way they operated and they were really organized. And just think that is one of the big things when you go to one of our practices, like, it is just so unorganized and the drills are so monotonous, that I just found SF to be more organized and structured. And you always knew what you were doing and I guess the coaching styles are really different.

--What reasons do you contribute to your continuation?

019: It is like a bad relationship, and I guess I just keep hoping it will get better.

--Are you in the sport in some other capacity?

019: I do clinics and I help with younger teams.

--Are you in physical education or some other sports related field?

019: No.

Recommendations:

My big thing now is that club ball is just so unorganized. Stuff that goes on, like we argue about first-and-third plays, and no one can reason it out rationally. In SF, at least we learned how to problem solve things, and discuss things before hand. I don't know there is just none of that, the players just didn't go through it, and their whole view of things, that's my, I don't even know what you can do about that. Because by then, everyone knows it all (joke).

### 020 Transcript

Age: 21

Age when began playing softball: 9

Age when began playing elite level ball: 14

Age when began SaskFirst: 15

Age when completed SaskFirst: 19

Nonstarter

--What levels of ball have you played since SaskFirst?

020: Ladies Intermediate "B"

--How long have you played ball at any level since completing SF?

020: 2 years.

--Are you presently playing elite level ball?

020: No.

--Are you planning to recenter elite ball?

020: No.

--Have you played other sports since SaskFirst?

020: No.

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

020: Not very good because I haven't been playing at that level since SF. So I wouldn't feel very confident playing that now.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play elite level ball immediately after the Canada Games?

020: Good. I would've kept playing, yah.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the SaskFirst program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

020: Positive. Because we did a lot of training and what we did on our own we had to do, but since there was a program set out for us it motivated us to go out and do something. You felt better by doing something. It made it more fun. It put you in better shape, like than if you weren't in it.

--If you had a daughter, would you want her to be a part of the SaskFirst program?

020: Definitely yes. Because it keeps people out of trouble because it keeps them busy doing something all the time. Like I know I didn't have a lot of time to go out while I was playing, and it just gave me something to do that kept me really busy and it made me feel good about something I was doing good.

--How do you perceive the training for the SaskFirst program?

020: It wasn't esy, but it was necessary for the type of level we were competing at. But, it wasn't easy, but it was definitely good.

--How many hours per week did you train?

020: Between 10 and 15.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

020: Yes.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

020: Yes. High school volleyball

High school curling

High school badminton

Club softball "A" and "B"

--Did you work while training?

020: No.

--Did you at some point attend university during your training?

020: Yes.

Did not play university sports.

--Overall how much time do you feel you had during your 4 year training for academics, friends, family, etc.?

020: I'd say enough time, a fair amount of time. I didn't have a lot of time for friends and going out, but for school I always had enough time for school. And family, I always had enough time for family. But I didn't have a lot of time going out with friends very much.

It was OK, you make a lot of friends on the SF team any way, so they kind of become your friends anyway. Like, you still hang out with your friends anyway, but you just met new friends, so it was like, OK. I had no regrets.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

020: Yep.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training, was this a good set up?

020: Yah, like if we wanted to switch things we could. Like it was set out for us but if, like, we had an aerobic program, we could do something else besides run for that. So, I think it was a fairly good set up.

--After completing your training and the completion of the Canada Games, how did you feel (LIST)?

020: Burned out or stale, but not totally, but a little bit. And kind of ready to move on with university and my career and stuff. I felt satisfied, definitely with the program. Kind of sad that it was over because you were leaving and everybody was going in different directions.

--How were you health and energy levels?

020: Good.

--How did you feel physically?

020: Very good.

--How did you feel mentally?

020: Good.

--Do you feel the present age of the SF athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

020: Yes. I know some people start when they were younger, like 13 that may be a little too young. But at the end everybody seemed to belong there.

--If your training began when you were older (20), do you feel this would have any affect on whether you would still be competing at an elite level?

020: No.

--With that question in mind, what about if you were 12?

020: No.

--How long have you been out of elite ball?

020: Since the Canada Games.

--Would you have continued playing at an elite level if the SF team could have styed together?

020: Yes and no. The reason that I quit was because it was getting to be too much. I couldn't work and play ball at the same time. And I needed to make to go to school. There was nothing in (Townsville) and I would either go to Regina or



Saskatoon to play. I would want to, but whether it interfered with having to work I don't know. I would probably have to say "NO".

--Did this have any bearing on your continuation at an elite level?

020: No.

--Would you have continued at an elite level if you could have still had an elite level coach to play for after the SF program?

020: It wouldn't matter.

Would you have played if elite players were in close proximity as opposed to being

scattered across the Province?

020: Maybe, if they were all in (Townsville)!

--Did you have an injury or illness that kept you from competing at an elite level?

020: No.

--Have you pursued other activities that contributed to the discontinuation of elite level ball?

020: No.

--After SF was there an elite level team available to you?

020: No, I would have to go to Regina or Saskatoon.

--Is there one now?

020: No.

--Have the following factors contributed to the discontinuation of elite level summer softball?

Career -- A lot, I have to work during the summer.

Schooling -- Sort of, but not really (work to go to school).

Signif. Others -- No.

Money -- Yah, helps to work to go to school.

Age -- No.

Location of comp. team -- Yah, I would have to travel or live there, pay rent and so on.

Fun/lack of -- No.

--What bearing did being a starter or nonstarter for SF have on your decision to discontinue at an elite level?

020: None

--What bearing did fundraising for a team have on your decision to discontinue?

020: None.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

020: I really enjoyed it and I really felt it was a good opportunity and it was a lot of fun. Basically I felt good after the program, I felt like I learned a lot.

--Did you parents, family and friends support you through your training?

020: Yep, definitely.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other level?

020: No

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other capacity?

020: I help the (Townsville) teams.

--Are you in physical education or some other type of sports related field?

020: No.

Sum up:

Basically, I discontinued because it was hard for me to either travel back and forth or move somewhere to play ball because going to university I had to work to get through university. It was getting too expensive for me to stay in elite ball.

Recommendations:

If there was an elite team where I live I would be playing, like no question. I don't know why people with a team around aren't playing. Unless they were burned out by the program, I don't know.

There is not enough players in the area I live in that would devote that much time to play like that. They like just recreational ball. So there would be like no chance of getting a team there. They wouldn't even go "B".

I know when I played (in Townsville) it was really hard, you were the one that wanted to stay after and you wanted to play more and there was just no way anybody else would be there. They were there just to have fun.

### 021 Transcript

Age: 20

Age when began playing softball: 5

Age when began playing elite softball: 12

Age when began SF: 14

Age when completed SF: 18

Nonstarter

--What levels of ball have you played since completing SF?

021: National and Provincial level, city "B"

--How long have you played ball at any level since completing SF?

021: 2 years.

--Are you presently playing at an elite level?

021: Play college ball. This year I didn't play "A" ball, but next year I might.

--Have you played other sports since Sask First?

021: No.

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of continuing to play elite-level softball immediately after the Canada Games?

021: I thought they were good.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the Sask First program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

021: I found it mixed. I found it positive, but there were still some negative things in it.

--If you had a daughter, would you want her to be a part of the SF program?

021: Yes, I think I would because it gives them a chance to learn better skills, and to meet other people and also travel, and to play high level competition and I think that is a good way to get self-esteem and learn to handle things under pressure, and how to strive for things.

--How do you perceive the training for the SF program?

021: I found it kind of routine. I didn't find it too stressful because...a lot of people thought she was asking a lot, but really if you thought about it we weren't asked to do too much. So I think it was basically routine.

--How many hours per week did you train?

021: I did my training program, like, religiously then (laugh). And so, I probably did an hour or two hours a day. So, 7 to 14 hours per week.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

021: Yes, I did.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

021: No I didn't.

--Did you work while training?

021: No, I didn't.

--Did you at some point attend university during your training?

021: No, I didn't.

Did not play university sports.

--Overall, how much time do you feel you had during your 4-year training for academics, family and friends?

021: I felt that I had enough time, it was just like, the long weekends. I never had a long weekend in like three years. And my birthdays were always on training weekends, but other than that, those were the only times I was ever upset about it, but, it was only one weekend a month usually, or a couple weekends. It was never anything too massive so you still had time for friends, you still had time for school.

But i wasn't in university too, and the people in university were a little more stressed out.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

021: Yes, because my life outside of softball has nothing to do with softball. Like, I have no connections to it in any way. Really, besides my family, but none of my friends were into it. So, I had different interests on the otherside.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training, was this a good set up?

021: Well, I think I had input for, because I am a pitcher, and for my pitching training, like we kind of worked the program to what was best around me, it was just my catcher and I developed it ourselves, basically, and just like using (the coach's) guidelines. But as for other things, like batting and fielding, I didn't get to do as much. I always had to catch for fielders doing grounders.

--Do you feel you had enough input, or do you think this was a good set up?

021: I think it was a good set up.

--After completing your training and the completion of the Canada Games how did you feel? (LIST)

021: I think I felt positive about continuing to play because I was going to continue anyways, because I was cut during the summer time and the I was asked back onto the team. I never once, because I was cut, I have seen other people since they were cut from Sask First and they never continued on, and I was going to prove them all wrong. So that I was going to keep going and it wasn't going to kill me. I wanted to show them that I could continue on with my life.

--After the end, how were your health and energy levels?

021: Mine was good.

--How did you feel physically?

021: Good.

--How did you feel mentally?

021: Oh, good.

--Do you feel the present age of the Sask First athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

021: Yes. I think it is a good age because it is before they get into having to work all the time. First year university are the oldest people, so they aren't too far into university yet. I think if you went any older they would have too many complications with having them fit this into their schedule and if you went younger it may be a bit too early.

--If your training began when you were older, say 20 years of age, do you feel it would have affected whether or not you would still be playing?

021: I think it probably would've because I would have been so tired and so burned out because I would have had school, and I would have to work as much as I could and then trying to work all that in. And I would have been so sick of it. I would've played ball, but not competitive.

--With that question in mind, what if your training began when you were younger, say 12?

021: Actually, I think it might be beneficial if they could start at that age, now that I think about it, because they would have the good skills in and not bad skills too young, so they weren't embedded. Then they don't have to work, and not much into school. I think it might be beneficial to move it down. I know when I was that age, I wasn't developed. I was like a late starter. I just kind of developed when the team started. I was always the last one chosen. I never even would have come close to making the team if I would have been age 12.

--How long have you been out of elite softball?

021: 1 year.

--Would you have continued playing at an elite level if the Sask First team could have stayed together?

021: Yes, I think I would have.

--Did this have any bearing on your discontinuation at an elite level?

021: No.

--Would you have continued at elite level softball if you could have had an elite coach after the Sask First program?

021: Yes, I think I would have, probably.

--How important would it be to continue with the same coaches (SF coaches)?

021: I think it would be kind of advantageous because you would be used to how they would be coaching and they would be, you wouldn't have to retrain each other all over again. Cause they would be used to you. I don't know I guess I



don't really have a yes/no answer to that one. Because it is also ok to have other coaches to have enough skills to teach other aspects too.

--Would you have played elite level ball if elite players could stay within close proximity?

021: Yes.

--Did you have an injury or illness that kept you from competing at an elite level?

021: No.

--Have you pursued other activities that have prevented you from playing elite ball?

021: No, I could have played this summer.

--After the Sask First program, was there an elite level team available to you?

021: Yes, I played 2 years with (the Blues), but last year I decided to play "B" because the team wasn't sure if they had a team first of all, then the people they were going to get on the team were used to be treated like stars. And whenever there were teams with them there would be fighting and so I just figured it wasn't worth it, rather than putting up with the bitching all summer long.

--Have the following factors contributed to your discontinuation? (LIST)

021: Yes, work. I did have to work quite a bit and the coach wasn't too understanding.

--What bearing did being a starter or nonstarter have on your decision to discontinue?

021: None.

--What bearing did fundraising have on your decision to discontinue?

021: None.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

021: I felt good. I was glad I had done it.

--Did your parents, family and friends support you through your training?

021: Yes.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other level?

021: Yes. College and Provincial "B".

--Are you in the sport in some other capacity?

021: Yes, I am a clinician.

--Are you in physical education or some other sports related field?

021: No.

--Anything else you would like to add?

021: No.

Recommendations:

I don't really know if I have any recommendations, just little things that have ruined our, we used to have a really strong (Team) and that's where the majority of the Sask First team came from, but it seems like Sask First kind of broke it up. Because we had players on the team that were really, really good but they either didn't try out for Sask First or got cut, and they just didn't have the people to play with anymore. So they just kind of dropped out. And then Sask

First ended and we couldn't get our team back together because everyone was so spread out so bad.

And I know when people got cut, why they got cut, sometimes the reasons were put a little too bluntly. And that really gave people hurt feelings. The letters they got were pretty insulting to their talents. They took them so personally.

### 022 Transcript

Age: 21

Age when began playing softball: 6

Age when began playing elite level ball: 12

Age when began SF: 15

Age when completed SF: 19

Nonstarter

--What levels of ball have you played since completing the SF program?

022: 1 year of "A".

--How long have you played ball at any level since SF?

022: 1 year.

--Are you presently competing at an elite level of ball?

022: No.

--Are you planning to reenter?

022: Yes.

--Have you played other sports since SaskFirst?

022: Yes. Recreational basketball.

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

022: The same as before.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play at an elite level softball immediately after the CGs?

022: I guess, that wasn't my decision to discontinue. I needed to get my education and I found that I had to work to go to school, in the summer.

--Would you consider your training and completion of the Canada Games positive negative, mixed or indifferent?

022: Oh it was very positive. We did not have a lot of resources in Moose Jaw that we had in team Sask. We had better coaching, players that were at a more competitive level, that wanted to achieve more, I found when you played ball on club teams it was disappointing and frustrating. I bettered my self as a player on team Sask.

--If you had a daughter, would you want her to be a part of the SF program?

022: Yes. I found it was a very rewarding program. You get to travel, you get to meet new people, you get to do what you love. I have loved ball since I was little. It is just an excellent program. I had made a lot of friends in the program too. It had a lot of benefits and rewards.

--How do you perceive the training for the SF program?

022: I didn't find it hard at all. When I was in HS I was in so many sports. I enjoyed the training, I didn't find it hard or bothersome.

--How many hours per week did you train?

022: 7-10 hours a week.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

022: Oh, yah.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

022: Yes. Volleyball -- HS

Basketball -- HS

Badminton -- HS

Track -- HS

Summer softball

--Did you work while training?

022: Yes.

--Did you at some point attend university during your training?

022: No.

Did not play university sports

--Overall how much time do you feel you had for academics, family, friends, etc.?

022: Quite a bit, my life was quite balanced. We did have a lot of training to do.

In university we had a lot more time to spare. My family is quite close. I don't think it affected my home life or socializing.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

022: Yes.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training?

022: Yah, the information was given to us and if we wanted to work on specific things we could talk to Shirley. The information was there, you just had to apply yourself to do it. You really had to be independent. I think it was a good set up. It was kind of hard being from Moose Jaw, and the rest of the team was in Regina and Saskatoon.

--After completing your training and completion of the Canada Games how did you feel (LIST)?

I felt positive about continuing to play at an elite level. It's just that, mixed things. I really wanted to continue, and talk of the team being up in the air here, I really didn't have the time or the financial resources to go to Saskatoon and play. I found that difficult. I really didn't know who else to contact, I guess I could've talked to Shirley, but I didn't think I could be as dedicated. I had to ask what my priority was, and I needed to get my education.

--How were your health and energy levels after the Canada Games?

022: Good.

--How did you feel physically?

022: The same, but I was also injured.

--How did you feel mentally?

022: Down. Because we didn't win the gold medal. I felt good because we did well as a team. We did well not only in competition but we did well, kind of like a family almost.

--Do you feel the present age of the SF athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

022: Yes.

--If your training began when you were older (20) do you feel you would still be competing at an elite level?

022: I kind of think that is getting a little older. It would be nice if it could continue on at that age, but I think that the skills and training for softball need to happen even sooner.

--What about if your training began when you were younger (12)?

022: I actually wouldn't mind doing that.

--How long have you been out of elite level ball?

022: 2 years.

--Would you have continued playing at an elite level if the SF team could have stayed together?

022: Most likely.

--Did this have any bearing on your continuation at an elite level?

022: No.

--Would you have continued playing at an elite level if you would have had an elite level coach to play for after SF?

022: Yah.

--How important would it be to continue with the SF coaches?

022: It is not an important thing. But it does affect because you know the person and everything, and they know you as a player. But I think anyone with skill and training, and years of playing the sport themselves has lots to contribute. I don't think it is necessary to continue with the same coach year after year, you kind of grow and expand. Different people will see different things in you as a ball player.

--Would you have played elite level ball if elite teams could stay within close proximity as opposed to being scattered across the Province?

022: It would be a lot easier.

--Did you have an injury or illness that kept you out of elite level ball?

022: I had a knee injury, but it didn't hamper my decision.

--Have you pursued other activities that have contributed to the discontinuation of elite level ball?

022: I am working and going to school, and working to go to school.

--After SF was there any elite softball program available for you?

022: There probably was, but I didn't look into it.

--Is there one now?

022: I don't know.

--Have the following factors contributed to the discontinuation of elite level ball?

Career -- Yes, I have to work in the summer to go to school

Schooling -- Yes.



Sig. other -- No.

Money -- Yes. I have to make it to go to school

Age -- No.

Location of team -- Yes, I would probably have to go to Saskatoon to play.

Fun or lack of -- No.

--What bearing did being a starter or nonstarter have on your decision to discontinue?

022: No bearing.

--What bearing did fundraising have on your decision to discontinue?

022: No.

--How did you feel after the CGs and the whole training process?

022: I felt rewarded and very fortunate to be a part of the team. Because there were so many people in Saskatchewan that tried out for the team. I really felt special.

--Did your parents, family and friends support you through your training?

022: Yes.

--Are you presently in the sport in some other level?

022: No.

--Are you presently involved in some other capacity?

022: No.

--Are you in PE or some other sports related field?

022: No I am in nursing.

Sum up:

Basically for my education and I know that if I was to return to playing elite softball when I'm in my nursing course It would be difficult to do both. I like to dedicate myself, and right now I am focusing on getting good marks and being able to focus all of my time on my studies and my job so that I have the funds to continue in the nursing program. Until then, I have kind of said I have done this with my life with ball so far, now I have to develop this area, and then if that option is still open to me when I finish my education, there would be no second thought that I would have of going back.

Recommendations:

None

### 023 Transcript

Age: 21

Age when began playing softball: 5

Age when began playing elite softball: 15

Age when began SaskFirst: 15

Age when completed SaskFirst: 18

Starter

--What levels of softball have you played since completing the SaskFirst program?

023: Nationals (Provincial "A" team) and College.

--How long have you played ball at any level since completing the SaskFirst program:

023: 3 years.

--Are presently competing at an elite level in softball?

023: Yes.

--Are you planning to reenter?

023: No.

--Have you played other sports since SaskFirst?

023: Yes, provincial team handball (provincial team)

Rugby (city league).

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

023: Very effective, capable of playing. I see myself as being able to play, doing well, doing what's needed.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play elite level softball immediately after the Canada Games?

023: Very good, very, very high.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the SaskFirst program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

023: Positive. When I entered I wasn't capable, I didn't think I was good enough. And I wasn't. My physical capabilities just weren't there. And just as I moved

throughout it just lead to positive attitudes towards playing. I just started at such a low point, I really wasn't a good softball player when I started, I don't think.

--If you had a daughter, would you want her to be a part of the SaskFirst program?

023: Yes, I think, definitely. The knowledge it can give them, the training, I think, umm, even though we were doing it to play in the Canada Games, it made people better ball players, to make them better. I think it had good points behind it, instead of just focusing on one thing.

--How do you perceive the training for the SaskFirst program? Stressful, routine, easy?

023: I wouldn't say stressful, maybe stressful sometimes with time commitments because it got hectic sometimes because we were trying to juggle playing 2 teams sometimes or 3 teams sometimes. The training itself wasn't stressful. Physically, it was hard on us, but I liked it. I didn't mind how demanding it was when you were on the ball field.

--How many hours per week did you train?

023: Probably about 5 hours a week.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

023: Not always. It was hard. When I was in high school, I was too young to understand what they had set out for us. They had the weight programs and the running out. I didn't have a problem with the running, but I did with the weights.

I am a big person, normally and fairly strong, so I didn't understand that. Now that

I am in University I understand that. I was too young to know it was good for me then. I did the running more than anything else, but not more than skills training.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

023: Yes. Provincial team handball

High school volleyball

High school softball

Provincial "A" softball

--Did you work while training?

023: Yes. In my final year of SF I was a full-time organ teacher.

--Did you attend university?

023: No.

--Did you play university sports?

023: No, but I am now.

--Overall how much time do you feel you had during your 4 year training for friends, family, academics, etc.?

023: Ample. The majority of my friends were on the SF program, which helped.

I enjoyed that. I never had a problem with the training weekends. We didn't have a cabin, so I didn't get caught up in wanting to do other things, really.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

023: Yes.

--Do you feel you had much input in your training? Do you think this was a good set up?

023: Yes. I think it was fine.

--After completing your training and completion of the Canada Games hoe did you feel? (list)

023: Definitely the first one -- positive about continuing to play at an elite level.

I felt I was really ready to go on. I was very secure about what they had taught us.

--How were your health and energy levels?

023: Fine.

--How did you feel physically?

023: Relieved. It was a lot of pressure and a big deal. I was relieved that we played well and made it that far. Disappointed about how we did, the final outcome. Just positive, I guess.

(I think she answered the "mentally" question -- I'll skip it)

--Do you feel the present age of the SaskFirst athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

023: Yes. I think you need to get ahold of kids before they lose softball. As they get older, they get less interested, and I think it keeps them going, it keeps them in it. I think the age that they finish at is a good age. They have to begin to make a decision about university or getting jobs, or whatever. I think it is a good age to help them out.

--If your training began when you were older (say 20 years of age) do you think it would've effected whether or not you would still be competing at an elite level?

023: I wouldn't be where I am now, for one thing. SaskFirst is how I got there. But, I think for me, it would've boosted it even more. I had my head on straight and really wanted to play ball. If I had that chance when I was 20, I would've made a lot more out of SaskFirst than I did when I was younger. But I still think it is too old.

--What if your training began when you were younger, say 12 years of age?

023: No. Too young. When you are 12 you play too many things. By the time it starts (14 or 15) it is at a time when kids are playing elite -- better softball (or sports), you have to focus, so it diminishes the other things they play. At 12 you are not focused yet, and I think it is too young to focus. If a kid is finished SF at 16 all they know is softball, and that isn't right.

--Do you feel being a starter or nonstarter for SF had any bearing on your decision to continue to play at an elite level?

023: Yes. Because it gave me the confidence, if the coaches felt I could play, you know, start...if I was good enough to start and play for them to help our team win, it gave me confidence to go on and play.

--Have you played elite level softball since completing the SF program?

023: Yes.

--Has there been a time when you did not compete in elite level softball (since SF)?

023: No.

--Did your parents, family and friends support you through your training?

023: Yes, totally, absolutely.

--How important was it to you to play with the SF athletes after the Canada Games?

023: It was really important, but it didn't happen. I would've liked to, but it didn't happen. A lot of the girls said, "I'm not playing any more and quit."

--How important was it to you to have an elite level coach to play for after the Canada Games?

023: Extremely important, it drives me nuts when people don't know anything..

--Do you have to travel to a team to be able to play elite level ball?

023: Yes, I have to drive to Saskatoon. It is discouraging, it's upsetting, I don't like having to drive for one thing. There are a lot of capable ball players left in Regina and they just don't have the drive, or the commitment to play anymore.

--Have the following factors contributed to the continuation of elite level summer softball?

Career: Not.

Schooling: Yes, I play university ball.

Significant Others: Yes, my Fiance is near.

Money: No.

Age: Yes -- It makes me want to play more, Jr. ball is running out.

Location of the Competitive team: Somewhat, I wanted to play good softball.

Fun or lack of fun: It makes me want to play, because we have a lot of fun with the people we play with.

--How long do you foresee playing softball at an elite level?



023: I am taking 1 year off to get married, I will be playing jr. or sr. "A", but not at nationals, cause I'm getting married. But I will continue the following year, possible more.

I will never play beer leagues. And I couldn't play for a lot of teams in Regina. I would either play elite or coach.

--How do you feel about playing on another team with players other than SF players?

023: Non Sask First players are bitter, I find a lot of bitterness, and that I don't like. You know, they feel I was handed the gold crown and somebody else wasn't. That I find tough. I found that tough my first year out. I found that very tough.

--How do you feel about playing on another team with coaches other than SF coaches?

023: Extremely difficult. It's the SaskFirst coaches fault (joke), because they teach us so much and then you have to go to some coach who doesn't know that it is some 20 year olds position to tell a coach what to do. So, very difficult.

--What reasons do you contribute to your continuation of elite level softball?

023: Elite ball made me good at ball. The coaching and training made me better than I've ever been and that's exciting and I don't want to give up on myself too soon. Like if someone good taught you and you are capable of playin then I don't want to give up on it.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

023: Good. I liked it, like I didn't regret any of it, like the training or the time.

And the Canada Games was one of favorite things I have ever, ever done.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other capacity other than a player?

023: No. At school we do clinics for young people.

--Are you in physical education or some other type of sports related field?

023: No.

Any recommendations?

023: One of the things I see is that they don't have the drive to do. Once SaskFirst was over, some of the players just wanted to stay at home, they didn't want to leave their boyfriends. There was just something that tied them down. I don't know if they had the same intensity of the sport. It just seemed like they were tied down. That that effected their decision, but I don't know how to change something like that.

### 025 Transcript

Age: 22

Age when began playing softball: 8

Age when began playing elite ball: 12

Age when began SF: 16

Age when completed SF: 19

Starter

--What levels of ball have you played since completing the SF program?

025: Beer leagues, ladies leagues. Mixed ball teams. 2 years of college ball.

--How long have you played ball at any level since Sask First?

025: 2 years.

--Are you presently competing at an elite level in softball?

025: No.

--Are you planning to reenter?

025: I'd like to, but I don't think there will ever be an elite level that I was in with (the Sask First coach).

--Have you played other sports since Sask First?

025: Recreation--Basketball

--Soccer

--Tennis

--Touch Football

--Racquetball

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

025: I don't think I would be able to play at an elite level right now. I have been out of it for 2 years, and I know I am not in the shape I was when I was in with (Sask First). There was no way, unless I could train again.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play elite level ball immediately after the Canada Games?

025: You bet, I was capable.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the SF program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

025: Positive, way plus positive. If I could've continued what I was doing, because after SF I went to college, and that was the most shittiest experience I have ever had in my life. I never thought college ball would be like the way it was. It was not at the elite level I was playing at. It was more recreational than professional.

--If you had a daughter, would you want her to be a part of the SF program?

025: You bet! Because it gives you an ego booster. It brings out the best in what you are capable of doing and it pushes you to do things better. It makes you an all around better person and athlete. It opens your eyes to so many things, especially with the coaches we had. You can't beat them. It shows you how to have respect for other people, it taught you how to be a better person. It was just a great experience, I would recommend it to everybody.

--How do you perceive the training for SF?

025: It wasn't easy. It was hard. They relied on you having to complete them yourselves. You had to do it all on your own. It took a lot of dedication and focus. At times it was stressful, because it was year-round.

--How many hours per week did you train?

025: 6-10 hours per week.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

025: First 2 years I did shit-all. The last 2 years I busted my ass off.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

025: Track--HS

Basketball--HS

Softball--HS

Basketball--College

Softball--College

Softball--City

--Did you work while training?

025: No.

--Did you attend university during your training?

025: Yes.

--Did you play university sports?

025: Yes.

--Overall, how much time do you feel you had during your 4-year training for academics, family and friends?

025: I think I had enough time, I know I had enough time to do all the stuff I wanted to do. The first 2 years were hard because you were in high school and that's when everyone wants to go out and party. I didn't do that. I didn't do what my friends did. And I didn't mind that, that was my choice.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

025: Yah. I think when I was playing ball my outside life was better. Softball was an ego boost. If I knew I could do it there, I know I could make it in college,

in life in general. And when the softball program was over, my life fell a part. It was a part of me. And now it's gone. I trained for four years and it's just gone.

That was my family.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training?

025: It was all up to me. That was an independent thing. Whatever I wanted to do I did. I wouldn't change it.

--After completing your training and the completion of the Canada Games, how did you feel?

025: I think I kind of felt a little burned out and then I felt sad. I also felt a little disappointed because I knew we could've won it. I felt sad. It was like my family just broke up.

--How were your health and energy levels?

025: Good.

--How did you feel physically?

025: Good shape.

--How did you feel mentally?

025: I was more stressed out, like, "What the hell am I going to do now?" now that I don't have a training program, and everyone is going there own ways. More stressed out than anything.

--Do you feel the present age of the SF athlete is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

025: Yes.

--If your training began when you were older (20), do you feel it would have affected whether you would still be competing at an elite level?

025: No.

--How about if you were 12?

025: No.

--How long have you been out of elite softball?

025: 2 years.

--Would you have continued playing at an elite level if the SF team could have stayed together?

025: You bet.

--Did this have any bearing on your continuation at an elite level?

025: No. Nothing was really offered to me. I was too old for the Jr. National Team. If I could've I would.

--Would you have continued at an elite level if you could have still had an elite level coach after SF?

025: Yep.

--How important would it be to continue with the same coaches(SF coaches)?

025: There is no doubt in my mind, I would HAVE to have them as my coach. Just cause they have been there for four years. I think they know everything. There is no doubt in my mind that they would have to be my coaches. I mean I would accept somebody else.

--Would you have played elite level ball if elite players could stay within close proximity?

025: Yes.

--Did you have an injury or illness that kept you from competing at an elite level?

025: No.

--Have you pursued other activities that contributed to the discontinuation of elite level ball?

025: No. The only thing that is stopping me now is that it is hard to play on teams that are below an elite level. It is too hard, I get too frustrated. I get angry that they don't know what they are doing.

--After SF was there any elite ball program available to you?

025: No, not unless I went to BC or Ontario.

--Is there one now?

025: No.

--Have the following factors contributed to the discontinuation of elite levelball?

025: Career--No.

Schooling--No.

Sign. Other--No.

Money--No.

Age--No.

Location of Team--Yes. I would have to travel to play on a team.

Fun or Lack of Fun--No.



--What bearing did being a starter or nonstarter have on your decision to discontinue elite level ball?

025: None.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

025: Long. It was worthwhile. It was exciting, it was fun, it was an all-around great experience. It was very disappointing and frustrating, and more stressful at the end than it was at the rest.

--Did your parents, family and friends support you through your training?

025: All the time.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other level?

025: Yes.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other capacity?

025: I've coached 2 years of pee wees.

--Are you in physical education or some other sports related field?

025: No.

Sum up:

Probably because it's hard not to play with the same players and not the same coaches. We all have that certain style. And after 4 years you grow accustomed to that certain style and that one way.

Recommendations:

Offer them more, give them more information after that. Encourage them. I don't know where the National Team is or how you get scouted out. I feel the

coaches should've given us more information about what is out there after. Maybe try and keep the team together. Maybe have a team in Regina. At that age college hits and everyone goes their own ways, so it's hard.

The teams out there now are not "A" ball. I do not consider that elite ball, that's ladies ball, like go out there and have fun.

**026 Transcript**

Age: 21

Age when began playing softball: 10

Age when began playing elite ball: 12

Age when began SaskFirst: 16

Age when completed SF: 19

Starter

--What levels of ball have you played since completing SaskFirst?

026: 1/2 year "A"

1/2 year "B"

Quit for 1 year

--Are you presently competing at an elite level?

026: Yes.

--Are you planning to reenter?

026: Yes.

--Have you played other sports since SF?

026: Yes. Ringette -- Provincial level

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently playing at an elite level?

026: Fairly good.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play elite level ball immediately after the Canada Games?

026: Very good.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the SF program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

026: Positive. I learned a lot of things. The coaches taught us a lot of new things. On other teams you don't really learn very much, it is usually same repetitive kinds of things. In SF they taught you new exciting kinds of things to do that we hadn't really seen before that we could try in a game situation. Learned to play with new people all over the Province, where you are used to just playing with people for about 10 years.

--If you had a daughter would you want her to be a part of the program?

026: Yes. It would be her choice, but it teaches you to be a team player, to cooperate with other people and for the same reasons I like it.

--How do you perceive the training for the SF program?

026: It was inbetween, like, it depends on the individual. For me it was kind of routine, for some people it was stressful.

--How many hours per week did you train?

026: About 10 hours.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

026: 1/2 the time. Didn't feel like doing so you didn't do it. Sometimes you got bored with theirs, so you did whatever you wanted to do. I didn't do much of the weight training because it was boring. I didn't do running very much, because I didn't like it, you kind of stuck in bike riding and aerobic, things that I liked. I did the skill stuff, but mostly in practice so you really didn't have to do very much of that on your own.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

026: Yes. Ringette -- Canada Games Team

Soccer -- High school

Basketball -- High school

Track & Field -- High school

Softball -- High school

Softball -- Prov. "A"

--Did you work while training?

026: No.

--Did you attend university during your training?

026: No.

Did not participate in university sports

--Overall how much time do you feel you had during your 4 year training for family, friends, and academics?

026: Not too many weekends. That kind of made things complicated at times, but you are willing to give that up. I enjoyed it. I got to be with my friends anyway, because they were on my team.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

026: Yah, I could've enjoyed a few more parties, you know! I managed to live through it!

--Did you feel you had much input in your training, was this a good set up?

026: I am one of the ones that the coaches were kind of upset at, because I didn't do what they wanted me to do. Off the field, I put a lot of input in my own. The coaches would've liked me to do what they would've wanted me to do, but I simply did what I wanted to do.

--After completing your training and the completion of the Canada Games, how did you feel?

026: Positive about continuing to play at an elite level -- Yes.

Ready to prepare for National team opportunities -- No.

Burned out or stale -- Yes, I was sick of ball.

Ready to try something else -- Yes.

Ready to get on with your life -- Yes.

Uncertain about the future of your participation -- Yes.

--How were your health and energy levels

026: A little tired, after a day or so it went away.

--How did you feel physically?

026: Not good, my knee was bad.

--How did you feel mentally?

026: Drained and happy it was over.

--Do you feel the present age of the SaskFirst athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

026: No. I think they should allow for a couple years older. At the age we started we weren't willing to put in 100%. I think with a couple more years, like now, I would be willing to put in the time, you know what it takes to train for something like that. And I don't think the people at that young of age realize how much time and effort she may have to put into training.

--What if your training began when you were (20) would this effect you continuing to play?

026: When you are older you are willing to train harder, but you would have to start at a younger age. But put in more time when you are older. Start them at a younger age, but just gradually get them into training harder.

--How about 12 years of age?

026: See above.

--Do you feel being a starter had any bearing on your decision to continue to play at an elite level?

026: Yes. If I didn't start and I didn't get to play. I think I would've given it up. What is the sense of playing if you aren't going to get much time on the ball field?

--Have you played elite level softball since completing SaskFirst?

026: Yes.

--Has there been a time when you did not play at an elite level?

026: Yes. I was injured so I had to take a year off.

--Did your parents, family and friends support you through your training?

026: Yes.

--How important was it to you to play with the SaskFirst athletes after the Canada Games?

026: Not too much.

--How important was it to you to have an elite level coach to play for after the Canada Games?

026: Important. It is very hard to go back to a really crappy coach after playing for people that really know what they are doing. They teach you things.

--Do you have to travel to a team to be able to play elite level ball?

026: yes I don't like it, but you do what you have to do.

--Have the following factors contributed to the continuation of elite level summer softball?

Career -- No.

Schooling -- Keeps the frustration low. It takes my mind off of school.

Significant others -- I like traveling with the girls, and the team situation .

Money -- Yah.

Age -- When I get older I'm not going to play.

Location -- You end up moving where they are.

Fun/Lack of -- It is getting harder every year. There is a lot of frustration. It is still a lot of fun, but it isn't like when you first started playing, like, when you first start playing you have fun and everyone gets to play and stuff like that. Now it's not fun, you have to win. But you like that, I am very competitive, and that's what keeps me playing. If it was just for fun I wouldn't be playing any more. It isn't FUN, but it is competitive so that is why I keep playing.

--How long do you foresee playing softball at an elite level?

026: A couple more yeras.

--How do you feel about being on another team with players other than SF players?

026: I would. It depends on their abilities, they would have to be elite athletes, kind of, knowing what they are doing. It is a lot different, as long as the caliber is good it isn't hard to adjust, it IS when the players aren't very good.

--How about coaches other than SF coaches?

026: I can deal with it as long as they know what they are talking about, and the same skill level as those coaches did, and I have respect for them.

--What reasons do you contribute to your continuation of ball at an elite level?

026: Because I love competition.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other capacity?

026: I have done some instructing at camps.

--Are you in P.E. or some other sports related field?

026: No.



Sum up:

Some players were favorited over other players and it affected players quite a bit. It caused a lot of bitter feelings. I think that is why our team broke up and went different ways. It really caused some bitter feelings between players.

Recommendations:

Overall it was good the way it is. But somehow the girls need to be aware of the time that needs to be put into this. Your life is kind of put on hold during competition time. I don't think they are aware of how much time needs to be put into it. Somehow you need to make them aware of how much training and making themselves better. I don't know how you'd do that, bu. Tell the coaches not to favor other players.

### 027 Transcript

Age: 21

Age when began playing softball: 14

Age when began playing elite level softball: 16

Age when began SaskFirst: 16

Age when completed SaskFirst: 19

Starter

--What levels of ball have you played since SaskFirst?

027: Elite summer ball and college NCAA II.

--How long have you played ball at any level since SF?

027: 3 years.

--Are you presently competing at an elite level in softball?

027: Yes.

--Are you planning to recenter?

027: Yes.

--Have you played other sports since SaskFirst?

027: No.

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of continuing to play at an elite level?

027: Highly capable.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of continuing to play at an elite level softball immediately after the Canada Games?

027: I didn't feel capable of playing ball in college in the United States, but I felt I was capable of playing in Saskatchewan.

--Would you consider your training and participation in the SaskFirst program positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

027: Positive. It was more than softball. You learned a lot about yourself, the mental aspect of the game. You learned about what being a member of a team was all about. The level of coaching was outstanding and I don't feel I have had coaching like that since. I was a wonderful program and it gave me so much experience with the game and with people that it was fantastic.

--If you had a daughter would you want her to be a part of the SaskFirst program?

027: I would definately want them to participate in the SaskFirst program.

Because of all the learning experiences you gain, all the people you meet, the discipline that is instilled in the players, it just really teaches what sport is all about.

--How do you perceive the training for the SF program?

027: I would say more routine, it wasn't stressful at any time. There was never an excess of training asked upon a player. I mean, you took it upon yourself to do the training, it wasn't forced upon you. Definately it was reflected in your play, and when it is reflected in your play, you sort of decided for yourself whether you were going to be on the field or not. So it was a situation where you were left to do what you needed to do.

--How many hours per week did you train?

027: I'd say about 10 hours.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

027: Probably more than anyone else. I probably did more strength training than what was prescribed, and possibly more endurance work.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

027: For 2 years I did. Elite volleyball

H.S. Basketball

H.S. Volleyball

H.S. Track

Elite softball

--Did you work while training?

027: Yes.

--Did you at some point attend university during your training?

027: Yes.

--Did you play university sports?

027: No, but I do now.

--Overall how much time do you feel you had during your training for academics, friends, family, etc.?

027: More than I knew what to do with! It didn't interfere with home or family life.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

027: Yes.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training, was this a good set up?

027: Definitely. I don't think I should have had more input, I think it was at an adequate level.

--After completing your training and completion of the Canada Games how did you feel? (LIST)

027: Positive about continuing to play at an elite level in Saskatchewan and uncertain about the future of my participation, but uncertain about playing at a college level in the States with my capabilities.

It was one of the best experiences of my life about just everything it taught me. Everything about it. It was a great program that instilled in me a lot of values. It made me realize a lot of things that were important to me at the time.

Because, at times, you had to trade off your time on the field with your social life and things. It really made me realize what was most important in my life.

--How were your health and energy levels?

027: Very high.

--How did you feel physically?

027: Good condition.

--How did you feel mentally?

027: Great!

--Do you feel the present age of the SaskFirst athletes is an appropriate age to train at this level of softball?

027: Yes.

--If your training began when you were older would it have affected whether you would still be competing at an elite level?

027: Probably, if it had taken that long for me to get to an elite level I would've stopped playing. I probably would have discontinued playing softball before the age of 20 if I hadn't got to play at that higher level with the SF program.

--With that question in mind, what if your training began when you were 12?

027: I may have gotten tired.

--Do you feel being a starter had any bearing on your decision to quit playing elite ball?

027: No.

--Have you played elite level ball since completing the SF program?

027: Yes.

--Has there been a time when you did not play in an elite level?

027: No.

--Did your parents, family and friends support you through your training?

027: Yes.

--How important was it to you to play with the SaskFirst athletes after the Canada Games?

027: Very important to me, for the first couple years. It had built such a strong bond between some of the players that at times, I couldn't even think of not playing with them. Because I felt that by playing with these individuals, no matter what others came into the team, we would still be able to maintain that elite level, even if the competition wasn't there. We ourselves could create it, creat that feeling, that intensity that we felt when we played in the Canada Games.

--How important was it to you to have an elite level coach to play for after the Canada Games?

027: It would've made a big difference. It was very important. We had got accustomed to having someone who knew so much about the game. Like a few individuals that new about the game, that taught us so much, that leaving the program, it was a let down. It was hard to play for those who didn't know as much as the coaches from the SF program. It would've made a big difference of where I played in the Province if I definately would go to a team that had a coach at that level.

--Do you have to travel to a team to play, how do you feel about that?

027: Yes I do. I am accustomed to it. It is worth it to me, to my future success in softball. I know it is a necessity because of where I live and I refuse to play ball at any other level, so it is something I know I have to do.

--Have the following factors contributed to the continuation of elite level summer ball?

Career -- No.

Schooling -- Yes. Attend US university on softball scholarship.

Significant others -- No.

Money -- Yes. I was offered a full ride for softball

Age -- No.

Location of competitive team -- No.

Fun or lack of -- It has a bearing on which I play for, but to decide to play, no.

--How long do you foresee playing softball at an elite level?

027: 2 to 3 years.

--How do you feel about playing on another team with players other than SF players?

027: I don't have a problem with that as long as it is at an elite level.

--How do you feel about playing on another team with coaches other than SF coaches?

027: I have no problem with that.

--What reasons do you contribute to your continuation of elite level softball?

027: I love the sport and I love the intensity of the game at that level and the people involved in the sport. And also it is a requirement for athletes at this university to play summer ball as well. I believe I would be doing it regardless of that. It also allows me to travel, I have played in several different cities. And I love every aspect of the sport and the team atmosphere has to offer.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

027: I was delighted with the whole thing. I wouldn't have a single regret about the time I spent training or the competition itself, it was outstanding. Even though we lost at the final game, I have NO bad memories of the entire four years of training for the program.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other capacity other than a player?

027: I do clinics, so I guess I am an instructor.

--Are you in Phys. Ed or some other sports related field?

027: No.

Recommendations:

The way I see it, I remember my situation and how I felt. After the program was finished, I basically felt softball was over for me. I didn't know if I wanted to continue with all the traveling and everything and I really didn't know that there was any further that I could go. IT was like I reached such a point in the sport, it felt like it was the end. It felt that it was the top, the pinnacle of the career type of thing. And I didn't know there was anything to go to after that. If I had, I



know instantly, like, I see now how athletes send their tapes all of these universities, all over the Country. And how easy it easy, really, to get a scholarship if you have some talent. And if I had known that, and been able to get in touch with more people, and find out what could come after, then I likely wouldn't have felt the way I did. It was just by luck and by chance that I was seen in the SaskFirst program and I got a scholarship. As soon as that occurred, I knew instantly that I wanted to play.

I really don't know how to fix it. When the SF program is finished is when you are turning 19, 20 years old and people's lives are changing. They are looking more towards the social life, even in the program. I don't really know if there is anything that can be done. It's hard, everybody's lives change at that point.

### 029 Transcript

Age: 19

Age when began playing softball: 6

Age when began playing elite ball: Unsure

Age when began SaskFirst: 13

Age when completed SaskFirst: 17

Starter

--What levels of ball have you played since completing SaskFirst?

029: Provincial A

National Team

--Are you presently playing elite level ball?

029: Yes.

--Are you planning to reenter elite level softball?

029: Yes.

--Have you played other sports since SaskFirst?

029: Yes. Volleyball -- Provincial/National

Basketball -- city league

Badminton -- city league

Track -- city/prov.

Bowling -- provincial

--How do you perceive your ability as a softball player and your capabilities of presently being able to play at an elite level?

029: Good.

--How did you perceive your capabilities of playing elite level ball immediately after the Canada Games?

029: Good.

--Would you consider your training and participation positive, negative, mixed or indifferent?

029: Positive. I think, we spent four years, granted we learned a lot about ball, but now when I look back on it we learned a lot of life skills. I think that if you went through those four years and all you got out of it was ball skills it was a waste of time. You only play ball for 'X' number of years, these are the skills that,

personal skills, interpersonal skills, they can be used for the rest of your life. That is what you gain from it besides softball skills.

--If you had a daughter would you want her to be a part of the program?

029: I would, just because I think there are certain skills you can learn from certain people. I think as a parent you can't teach everything. I think it was a positive experience, and I would want her to be a part of it.

--How do you perceive the training for the SaskFirst program?

029: It is very intense. We had training programs, like sprinting programs, aerobic, weights, and stuff. And a lot of people didn't do it, me included. You might have done bits and pieces of it, but, even like talking to the other girls, you wouldn't even have done half of it, maybe less. Just because you are 15, 16 when you start and your friends on the weekend are going to the lake and stuff, and you would be like, no-no I can't go I have to do ball. I think sometimes when other people are doing, like if you spent all your time doing what you were supposed to do you would probably be sick of it, and stuff like that.

It was intense when we were together. On our own we didn't do it.

Practices were organized, you put in your time and you went home.

--How many hours per week did you train?

029: I didn't really train specifically for SF. But for the SPORT of softball, about 12 hours a week.

--Did you adhere to the training program designed for you by the coach?

029: Not really. I didn't not follow it to a "T". I did more throwing (pitching) and weights.

--Did you participate in other sports while training for this team?

029: Yes. Volleyball -- high school, provincial

Basketball -- high school

Badminton -- high school -- city

Track -- high school

Bowling-- provincial

--Did you work while training?

029: Yes.

--Did you at some point attend university during your training?

029: No.

Did not play university sports.

--Overall how much time do you feel you had during your training for family, friends, academics, etc.?

029: I think for relatives and stuff I had enough time. With school, I was doing all these other sports I found time. friends, I found time for that also. I think basically if you want to do something you'll find time for it. I think it was frustrating sometimes, like on weekends I was always gone and stuff. You kind of lose friends. You are never around, you never get to do things.

--Were you satisfied with your life outside of softball?

029: Yah, I think so.

--Did you feel you had much input in your training, was this a good set up?

029: We were given a training program, and it was up to us to find time to do it. But it wasn't really asked "How many days a week do you want to train?" I don't think we should have had more input. For me, personally, I really had no idea what I was getting into, so how could I have more input for stuff like that.

--After completing your training and the completion of the Canada Games how did you feel? (list)

029: I was uncertain about the future of my participation. Not interms of playing ball and stuff, but I didn't know where to go with it. I thinnk because, playing SaskFirst, that was the highlight of my career, and you go back to your club team and there is no more SaskFirst. Nobody is there to win for the same reasons you are there, and the same reasons everyone was there for SaskFirst. And that was frustrating. The coaching is totally different. Especially the first year after, it was awful. We kind of stuck ou in terms of a coach that year. So that was also really frustrating. And I honestly remeber Shirley saying that I was young enough for the Jr. National team, but I honestly didn't think about that seriously. I felt I had reached my peak in ball, now what do I do?

--How were your health and energy levels?

029: Fine.

--How did you feel physically?

029: All right.

--How did you feel mentally?

029: All right.

--Do you feel the present age of the Saskfirst athletes is an appropriate age to training at this level of softball?

029: Yes. It depends on how you are training them though. I think a lot was expected of us. I think the coaches need to understand that we were young, and that we need other things in our life, there are things we want to do. It is kind of hard to say I will dedicate my life to ball right now. There are so many other things, opportunities to take advantage of and to try out. It is hard to commit totally to softball at 15 or 16.

--If your training began when you were older (20) would it have affected whether you would still be playing ball at an elite level?

029: Yes. I don't think I would've developed as much as I would've. If you are playing and you are not very good, that's not very fun. It is not fun getting knocked around the park, what incentive is there to play? They developed me, and I can stand my ground now. I wanted to continue, they have showed me so many things that I am still working on, different pitching, hitting and stuff like that. I know about it but I haven't mastered it. If I hadn't been exposed to that I wouldn't have the coaching and the knowledge to tell me about these things. So I don't know how long I would've continued or tried another sport more seriously, I don't really know.

--What if your training began when you were 12?

029: I think before the age of 12 you don't really, I know for me my friends would ask me to go out, and I would have to say "No, I have to go train for softball".

And I was like "What am I saying, I HAVE to go play softball." Like do I want to do this, or do I HAVE to do this? It wasn't until I was 15 or 16 that I realized that this was something I loved to do, something I wanted to do. For to be starting at 12, and for someone who hasn't developed that kind of feeling toward ball, and to be pushed on it so hard, might deter them from it. Ball burnout or whatever.

--Do you think being a starter had any bearing on you continuing to play at an elite level?

029: Yes. Just this last year, I sat a lot. And when you are pitching, you are used to some type of a rotation. And my rotation would be skipped over and it was really frustrating. And it got to the point where I was afraid to play. I hadn't had that feeling for so long.

--Have you played elite level ball since completing SF?

029: Yes.

--Has there been a time when you did not play at an elite level since SF?

029: No.

--Did your parents, family and friends support you through your training?

029: I don't think my friends really understood the whole idea behind the SaskFirst program, nor the magnitude of what I was doing. There are so few girls that get the chance to be a part of the program and I was one of them, and I don't think they understood. Aside from that, the people were involved. It was the girls in the

program that understood that encouraged. I think there was a lot of jealousy that weren't a part of it. They would be at a tournament, and we'd have to miss for a camp, and when we came back we would be playing instead of them. I think that lead to some team decension.

My parents would always be out to watch, lend me money and so on.

--How important to you was it to play with the SF athletes after the SF program?

029: Actually, after the Canada Games it felt like I wouldn't see these people again, I wouldn't play ball with these players again. So I just kind of expected I wouldn't play with them again.

--How important was it to you to play for an elite level coach after the Canada Games?

029: I think I would've really liked it. I missed playing for someone with all the knowledge. In a sense, maybe it was a good thing that was just the opposite, went to the beer gardens in between innings of the games, seriously. In that sense, you realized how lucky you were lucky to have had the opportunity. I think you kind of look to yourself to do the training on your own and improve yourself because you wouldn't get that at practice.

Sometimes I felt like there was nothing else to work towards, just Nationals. But then I got a phone call for the National team. That was probably the main thing that kept me from quitting.

--Do you have to travel to a team to play elite ball?

029: No.



--Have the following factors contributed to the continuation of elite level ball?

029: Career: It supplies money to play

Schooling -- No, but I got a scholarship (softball)

Significant others -- No.

Money -- No.

Age -- Well, I'm still young enough, and can play for a university team

Location -- Yes, I don't have to travel

Fun/lack of -- I think that there has been years that have been a lot more fun than others, but I probably wouldn't have given that up for the world. I learned a lot, alot about how people are. Just how to handle people in certain situations. But when you have a team like we did last year, they were pretty good, you could talk to them and stuff, it made it even better.

--How long do you foresee playing ball at an elite level.

029: I promised myself I wouldn't quit until I won a major (National) championship.

--How do you feel about playing on a team with players other than SaskFirst players?

029: I think I kind of needed that. Playing with SF you kind of know you were good because you were there, I think when you go back to the club team you have to be humble and not talk about SF all the time. Other people haven't experienced it so it could be very irritating.

--How do you feel about being on a team with coaches other than SF coaches?

029: During the years that I was with SF, if things didn't go well on my club team everything would be OK because I could go play with Shirley, and everything would be A-OK. But, when that wasn't there anymore it was hard to adjust to the lack of organization and knowledge.

--What reasons do you contribute your continuation of elite level ball?

029: I still have things I would like to accomplish before I quit.

--How did you feel after the Canada Games and the whole training process?

029: I was satisfied about the results, winning silver. It was dissapointing because we didn't get the gold, but to think of how far we had come since we started. Shirley had made some of us the best players in Canada. It was pretty amazing. When I look back on it, I have no regrets about the last game. I don't think anyone could have pitched a better game than Liane. After the last game I was pretty sad. Sad that I wouldn't see a lot of these players again, I was just starting to get to know (the Sask First coaches) and when am I ever going to see them again? It taught me a lot of discipline, you had to organize your time with school, a job, other sports and so on. And time for your friends and personal time, and stuff like that. I really don't regret anything about the SF program. Like, when I llok back on it maybe there was some times I would like to have back and maybe train more here and there. I guess at the time there was other things I needed to do, and I did them.

--Are you presently involved in the sport in some other capacity other than player?

029: I do clinics.

--Are you in physical education or some other sports related field?

029: No.

Recommendations:

The 4 years is so focused on ball. And at the time it was great. During the 4 years it would be hard to get a guy that would understand. After the 4 years, you find Mr. Right, you are willing to give up ball for something else. And if you feel there is nothing left to work towards, and that was your highest point. You are never going to do anything better so why continue, you might as well end on a high note.

I don't really know how you can change it. You need to train to be competitive.

If the team after SF is not a very skilled team, playing with people who aren't at a very high level it is just really hard to compete with that after that.

When you are losing all the time, I don't know.

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