

BC3 softball pitcher No. 1 in NJCAA Division III with .667 batting average

Pioneers land two of 10 first-team spots on all-region squad

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(Butler, PA) Jessi Reed, a pitcher on the Butler County Community College softball team, this spring became the second Pioneer in consecutive seasons to lead players on all 77 National Junior College Athletic Association Division III squads in batting average.

Reed, a Knoch High graduate, batted .667 in 2018, following teammate Nikki Houk, a New Castle Area High graduate, who hit .627 in 2017.

Houk and Reed, key players on Pioneer squads that posted a combined 25-8 record the past two seasons and in 2018 won a third straight Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference championship, have also been named for a second season in a row to the NJCAA Division III All-Region XX first team.

“They are very well-respected in the region,” Pioneers Coach Dan Beebe said. “To be selected two years in a row to the first team, everybody saw their potential and their talents on the field.”

Houk’s 2017 batting average also led players on all 350 teams in the NJCAA’s three divisions; Reed’s was second only to sophomore infielder Chyann Hooker, of Northern Virginia Community College, Springfield, Va., who topped Division II at .682. Danae Villarreal, a sophomore infielder for Clarendon College, Clarendon, Texas, hit .528 in 2018 to lead the NJCAA’s Division I.

“For them to be ranked like that in back-to-back years is very impressive and something they should be very proud about,” Beebe said.



Jessi Reed, a pitcher on the Butler County Community College softball team, is shown April 21, 2018, when the Pioneers beat Garrett College, McHenry, Md., 7-6 to win their third consecutive Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference title in a row. Reed has been chosen for a second consecutive season to the National Junior College Athletic Association Division III All-Region XX first team.

The batting averages reflected “how much we work and how dedicated we are,” Reed said. “We have to work to earn that batting average. It doesn’t just come naturally. It shows how dedicated we are. Our coaches made sure we were getting our reps. It really shows our dedication.”

Reed and Houk, both sophomores, are among 10 players selected to the all-region first team.

Pioneers sophomore infielder Ashley Coon, of Karns City, was among three players chosen as honorable mention.

Region XX does not award a second or third team.

Reed “was on fire,” teammate says

Reed had a team-leading 14 hits in 21 at-bats for BC3, which on April 21 claimed its third consecutive WPCY title with a 7-6 victory against Garrett College, McHenry, Md. Reed also led the Pioneers with 10 RBI and tied with two teammates with three doubles and one triple.

“She,” Houk said, “was on fire.”

For a pitcher to have offensive statistics such as Reed “is very rare,” Beebe said. “You don’t see a dual threat like that.”

Reed, a right-handed pitcher who finished 5-1 in the circle, started six games and appeared in seven. She allowed 34 hits in 33.2 innings, fanned 24, walked eight and had an earned-run average of .250 – 15th best among in Division III – and gives much of her credit to catcher Alexis Vogan, a Slippery Rock Area High graduate.

“We have a solid connection,” Reed said. “I throw very well to her. She knows what to call. She knows which pitches I am feeling. She knows what pitches I have that are working. Which ones aren’t. When you get to a batter and you get to a certain point in the account, you think of a pitch immediately to throw. And nine times out of 10 we were thinking the same pitch.”

Houk, who in 2017 became the Pioneers’ first softball All-American, was third on BC3’s roster with a .480 batting average in 2018. She was second with 12 hits in 25 at-bats, and led BC3 with two home runs and with 14 stolen bases. She also knocked in five runs.

“She had an amazing bat,” Reed said.



Nikki Houk, a center fielder on the Butler County Community College softball team, is shown April 21, 2018, when the Pioneers beat Garrett College, McHenry, Md., 7-6 to win their third consecutive Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference title in a row. Houk has been chosen for a second consecutive season to the National Junior College Athletic Association Division III All-Region XX first team.

Coon among leaders in batting average, RBIs

Coon was second on BC3's roster with a .526 batting average and with eight RBI, third with 10 hits in 19 at-bats and added the Pioneers' third home run of the season.

Houk had a fielding percentage of .929 with 10 putouts and three assists from center field; Reed was .864 and Coon, .857.

"Coon," Houk said, "was a champ at third."

Beebe agreed.

"She plays with all heart," Beebe said. "She goes 100 percent all the time in the field, and is a very naturally strong player."

Houk and Reed were among four Pioneers on the 2017 NJCAA Division III All-Region XX first-team, which included BC3 infielder Noel Pfabe and Vogan. Sophomore infielder Codi Reed was named an honorable mention.



Ashley Coon, a third baseman on the Butler County Community College softball team, is shown April 21, 2018, when the Pioneers beat Garrett College, McHenry, Md., 7-6 to win their third consecutive Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference title in a row. Coon has been chosen as an honorable mention selection for the National Junior College Athletic Association Division III All-Region XX team.