

## Fiser, Drahozal, Schulte are Barracudas

Written by Jim Ecker

Sunday, 15 July 2012 20:53 - Last Updated Sunday, 15 July 2012 20:58

---



Amber Fiser is just 14 years old has not taken a single class at Marion High School yet, but she's already established herself as one of the top athletes in the building.

Fiser excelled as an eighth grader on the Marion softball team this season as a pitcher and hitter, earning spots on the all-Wamac and all-Metro honor squads.

Another honor has come her way this summer as well: Fiser has been selected to play on the 18-and-under Barracudas Gold elite softball team that will compete in tournaments in Orlando, Chicago, St. Louis and Las Vegas this fall and winter.

Erin Drahozal and Jenna Schulte, two of the top players at Xavier High School, will be Fiser's teammates on the Barracudas, who draw their players from around Eastern Iowa.

Fiser competed against older girls during the high school season and does not sound intimidated about playing on an 18U club.

"Somehow I'll manage," she said Sunday. "I'll be fine. I've had a lot of really good competition so far."

Drahozal, a pitcher and designated hitter, just finished her freshman campaign with the Saints and is joining the Barracudas Gold for the first time. Schulte, a first baseman, finished her junior

season at Xavier and has played for the Barracudas Gold in prior years.

Fiser made the Barracudas as a 14-year-old eighth grader.

"It's actually quite unusual," said Barracudas Gold Coach Ken Thimmesch. "She's proven to have that ability. It's a question of maturity. Can she handle the pressure at this level?"

"Her athletic ability is second-to-none at this point. Can she pitch against that caliber of competition? We think she can, or we wouldn't have given her this opportunity."

There are only 11 girls on the team, so roster spots are hard to get. The coaches in the Barracudas organization scout the girls and hold tryouts.

"We follow them around and watch them during the high school season," said Thimmesch.

Fiser hit .342 for Marion and compiled a 10-8 record on the mound with a 2.05 earned run average. She made first team all-Wamac and second team all-Metro. She struck out 193 batters in 140 innings pitched.

Schulte hit .299 with six homers and 46 RBIs for Xavier and played excellent defense at first base. She joined Fiser as second team all-Metro.

Drahozal, who played for Xavier last year as an eighth grader, hit .313 with three homers and 45 RBIs for the Saints this season and compiled a 12-8 mark as a pitcher with a 2.97 ERA. She struck out 65 batters in 132 innings and received Honorable Mention on the all-Metro team.

Fiser said she feels "really good" about making the Barracudas Gold outfit. "It will be a good experience playing against girls ahead of me in school," she said.

Fiser will not celebrate her 15th birthday until February. She anticipated making the Marion varsity this year after Marion Coach Kim Knapp talked to her before the season began about getting a varsity jersey and gear. Even so, playing for the varsity before she'd actually taken a class at Marion was an adjustment.

"It was kind of awkward. But, oh well," she remarked. "I was really happy to make varsity, because I knew it would be tougher competition. I'm kind of used to it."

Fiser has played for younger teams in the Barracudas organization and also played for the Blue Devils, an elite softball team that's based in Cedar Rapids. She's taken pitching lessons from Ben Sorden, who is the head softball coach at Solon High School and an assistant coach at Coe College.

Fiser is proud of what she accomplished as an eighth grader for the Indians this season.

"I feel good. I was kind of shocked," she said. "I can't wait until next year to get better."