

## SOFTBALL HURLER ANNA STALLINGS SIGNS WITH CHRISTIAN BROTHERS UNIVERSITY



Above: Anna Stallings, surrounded by her family, signs her softball grant-in-aid with Christian Brothers University. (Photo by Ron Barry)

Every single coach who has ever worked with Crockett County pitcher Anna Stallings has been extremely consistent in describing the Lady Cavalier hurler's top trait: her consistency. The Crockett senior signed to continue her softball career at Christian Brothers University, and all four coaches who spoke at her scholarship ceremony Friday could have exchanged notes with each other and still delivered basically the same speech.

Former Crockett coaches Duke Kail and David Barker, current mentor Baron Jimmerson, and travel ball leader Jim Lewis all shared some variety of a similar summary of Stallings' demeanor and personality.

"I tried hard to get her to talk more, but that's not her way."

"She leads by example, not with words."

"Never changes expressions; you wouldn't know by looking at her if she was down by five runs or up by 15."

"I didn't ever have to worry about how Anna was handling things. She just never gets rattled."

Any of the four coaches could have made those statements, or all of them. And for the record, they did.

Kail kicked off the Friday ceremony by acknowledging Stallings' considerable talent and success – she already received the District 13-AAA Pitcher of the Year award last year in leading Crockett to a 28-10 record – and described a typical visit to the pitcher's circle during a game.

"You all right, Anna?" "Yes, sir." "Your changeup working today?" "Yes, sir."

"That was about all you're going to get out of Anna," Kail smiled. "She may be the quietest player I've ever coached. But I never had to worry about her. What you see is what you get with Anna – leadership by example."

Barker listed a thesaurus of synonyms to describe her, including "calm, collected, nonchalant, unflappable..." before settling on the word that he credits for her success.

"Anna is unshakeable," he said. "It didn't matter what situation she gets put into, she's going to be quietly confident and – way more often than not – get the job done. I remember reaching the (TSSAA) State Tournament during her freshman year. That's a lot of pressure for a freshman to handle, but it didn't faze Anna one bit."

Lewis, who coached Stallings during the summers for the Mississippi Glory organization, said Stallings is the only player he has ever taken without personally watching her play first.

"That was because of the recommendation of our catcher, Lynden Cole (former Crockett standout)," Lewis said. "She told me, 'Coach, I know somebody you need to get.' When I asked her to tell me why, Lynden just looked at me and said, 'She's a winner!' If Lynden Cole thinks you're a winner, I'm not going to question it. And that's exactly what Anna has been for us."

Jimmerson, who took the Crockett head coaching position last season after several years at South Gibson, had a unique view of the 'sameness' of Stallings' game.

"I've seen it from both sides," he laughed. "I've coached against her, and I've coached with her. I'd rather be with her. When we have a visit in the circle during a game, it's never because I need to worry about Anna. She's always all right – she's never rattled by anything. Usually it's because I want to talk to the infielders. Every once in a while, it may be just to slow down the other team if they're starting to get on a roll. But Anna's going to be the same, no matter what."

All four coaches were also quick to counter any thought that her quietness was because she's not as competitive as she needs to be. They all agreed she wants to win as badly as anyone on the field. Even as a sophomore, Stallings won 16 games and posted an earned run average (ERA) of 1.98.

The thoughtful senior said she selected Christian Brothers University for a couple of distinct reasons.

"When I visited, I really liked the atmosphere of the campus," Stallings said. "Everyone was extremely nice to us, and the team seemed to be very close with each other. But also, I like the fact that Coach (Tara) Wheeler sees each player as a whole person, more than as just a player. She's interested in her team members as people first, and that they have lives away from softball."

Anna is the daughter of Crockett County High School health sciences teacher Candy Stallings and Anthony Stallings. She'll be breaking in a new starting catcher for the third straight season; the previous two, Cole and Madison Solis, are both playing collegiate ball this coming spring.



**Above:** Anna Stallings won the District 13-AAA Pitcher of the Year award in her junior year. (Photo by Ron Barry)

**Below:** With a solid fastball and a devastating changeup, Stallings' future at CBU should be bright. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Above:** Anna Stallings is pictured here with catcher Lynden Cole, who recommended the pitcher be added to the Mississippi Glory summer ball roster. (Photo by Ron Barry)



**Above:** Coaches who have worked with Anna Stallings joined her for Friday's ceremony. (Photo by Ron Barry)

**Left:** At any given time during any game, this is pretty much the expression you'll find on Anna Stallings' face. (Photo by Ron Barry)