

## The Herald-Palladium ATHLETE SPOTLIGHT



Don Campbell / HP staff

**After receiving a liver transplant, Madi Whitlow is continuing her softball career at Lake Michigan College.**

# Madi Whitlow:

Liver transplant doesn't stop LMC pitcher

**By BEN SPENCER**

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For most 16-year-olds, a liver transplant would be enough to keep them out of the game for a while. This was not the case for Lake Michigan College's Madi Whitlow.

The now-18-year-old Red Hawks pitcher and River Valley High School graduate received a liver transplant in December of 2014, her junior year. She was back practicing with her team by March 2015.

"They told me that I would have to take two months off school, maybe three," said Whitlow. "I returned to school in early March. Softball practice started the very next week."

Whitlow was born with Alpha 1 antitrypsin deficiency, a genetic disorder that causes defective production of Alpha 1 antitrypsin, or A1AT. A1AT deficiency causes the A1AT protein to produce itself abnormally, ultimately resulting in the build-up of the protein in the liver. This can have a dangerous impact on the liver and lungs.

For Whitlow, who was diagnosed as a baby, this led to cirrhosis of the liver at age 14. She was placed on the transplant list that year and, in 2016, was finally able to receive her transplant.

"Madi is a class kid," said Lake Michigan College softball coach John Jewell. "She's a teammate. It's always about the team for her. She's quiet, but she always goes out and does her job."

"She's the kind of kid that everyone would want

on their team."

As an undecided major, Whitlow is still unsure of her future academically, but thinks she one day might like to become a medical social worker.

"I'm toying with the idea," said Whitlow. "I actually had one on my liver transplant team, and I really like what she did for me, so I would like to do that for someone else one day."

**Have there been any major challenges for you since your transplant?**

I was trying to get back in the spring of things. I was catching up on two months of school, so that was really tough on me. I worked out a lot and just tried to get back in shape from my surgery.

**Are there big takeaways or life lessons that you learned as a result of your transplant?**

Anything is possible if you set your mind to it. A lot of people told me I would not be able to play that season, but I didn't want to accept that, so I did everything I could to catch up in school and get back on the mound.

**What is your favorite part about playing softball?**

I like that the strengths and weaknesses kind of come together. Everyone can be good at a different position. Some people can be good at bunting or slapping. I just like that all our differences can make us stronger as a team.

**Is there anything else you like to do outside of school and softball?**

Right now it's just school and softball. It takes up a lot of my time. It's all softball.

*The Herald-Palladium's Athlete Spotlight appears weekly on Monday in The HP Sports section during the school year. Athletes are chosen by HP staff members. Suggestions for Athlete Spotlight are welcome. Email suggestions to sports@TheHP.com. Athletes are limited to one selection per school year.*