

Gosselin uses big bat to put up big numbers for Jackets

Hot dog-loving center fielder leaving her mark on MSUB program



Steph Gosselin doesn't need anything gourmet. She prefers a simple hot dog or two for her between-game meal.

"I like to play when I'm full," explained the Montana State Billings softball player. "Since I've been a kid, I have to have a hot dog between games. Maybe that's from being around the ballpark all my life, I just love hot dogs. And I always have something in my bag to eat."

A player needs her strength when she's swinging heavy metal.

Gosselin, a senior from Canada, carries a big bat for the Yellowjackets. She is one of the team's leading sluggers and ranks among the career top 10 in nine different categories.

Gosselin, along with teammate Leslie Davis, uses a 34-inch, 26-ounce bat, the heaviest available in the MSUB selection. Along with the ability to belt the ball to all fields, Gosselin is the all-time leader for runs scored and currently the career leader for RBIs with 95.

Teammate Terina Stacks, who hits ahead of Gosselin in the lineup, is second with 92 with 24 games remaining on the schedule.

"Terina jokes with me that she won't run any further on base so I won't get any more RBIs," said Gosselin with a good laugh. "The numbers do surprise me, I'm just doing my job ... moving the runners and trying to help my team win."

Gosselin is used to wielding a big stick. Along with softball, she also played hockey in middle school and high school as a right winger and was a standout goal keeper in soccer. "I do miss hockey," Gosselin said. "It's just a really fun sport to play. I've still got four, five sticks at home. Now I take my aggression out on the ball."

Batting in the third spot this season, Gosselin is hitting .364 with eight home runs and 29 RBIs. She has a team-high .673 slugging percentage. "Growing up, I'd always been a contact hitter," said Gosselin. "I never had any power. My first home run was my freshman year here ... it was my first home run ever and my only one that season.



"I didn't know I could do that. I couldn't really tell you why. Maybe it's a combination of working in the weight room and a lot of practice swings."



Last year, Gosselin hit .408 - second-best in the Great Northwest Athletic Conference - with 10 doubles, five home runs and 27 RBI. A three-year starter, she has 46 multi-hit games in her career, including 10 already this season. Gosselin has started 127 of 129 games the last three seasons. "You get in a zone and it feels like nothing can stop you," Gosselin said.

"Some days you see the ball really well and you can't wait to get up there and hit.

"You definitely know when you've hit it in the sweet spot."

And Gosselin is more than just a dangerous hitter. She's a long-ranging centerfielder with a strong arm. It's her responsibility to help her flanking teammates during games. "I try to be a leader out there," said Gosselin. "To make sure the other outfielders are aware of the situation. We talk out there and help each other. At our park, the sun is right in our eyes, so we have to help each other."



Coming out of secondary school in Victoria, British Columbia, Gosselin's athletic career almost veered toward soccer where she was offered a scholarship at the University of Victoria. Through the father of Stephanie Rinehart, who played for MSUB in 2005, Gosselin got in contact with then MSUB head coach Jeff Aumend. "I had no clue where Billings, Montana was," she admitted with another laugh. "It was a tough choice, soccer or softball. My parents (Ron and Marina) were very supportive. I wanted to get away and try something new.

"I realized that softball is my love. I could play every day in my life and not get sick of it."

That, like her preference for hot dogs, came while growing up at the softball field. She attended games while her parents played. "I've been around the ball park since I was four years old," Gosselin said. "I always wanted to be involved. They tried everything they could to keep me off the field ... they couldn't."

Right after Gosselin signed to play for Aumend, he left for a Division I program in South Carolina. She played her first season for Sean McGary and second for Kim Lemmons. Stone took over the program last year. "It's tough to come in and start over every year," said Gosselin. "It's good this year, we know what to expect and we can tell the younger players how it's done."



Gosselin, a physical education major, came in with a large freshman class that was given the job of filling the holes left by a senior group that carried the Yellowjackets to the NCAA West Regional in 2005. There weren't many upperclassmen to help the new players. "We had to kind of learn on our own," Gosselin said. "Not only what is expected on the field, but also off. We had to learn how to take care of our academics, study hall and how to travel."

Now that part of that responsibility falls upon Gosselin, a two-year captain. "I have to make sure everybody is following the rules, that everybody is together," she added. "But I have to make sure I'm on top of my own stuff." Entering this weekend's home games against Saint Martin's, MSUB is 24-10 and ranked fourth in the West Region poll. A pre-season pick to win the Great Northwest Athletic Conference, the Yellowjackets are firmly playing for the post-season.

"The seven seniors, we feel like it's our year," Gosselin said, speaking for the group. And when the season ends for MSUB, Gosselin's could continue. With Italian citizenship through her mother, Gosselin might have a chance to play professionally in Italy. She is half-Italian. "I understand it, but I don't speak it very well," Gosselin said. "If I get the chance, I'll to work on that."

But do they have hot dogs in Italy?

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Steph Gosselin played for the Sharx in the season 2007 and 2008, winning the silver medal at the European Cup 2008 in Prague.