

ALL-AREA SOFTBALL

**ALL-OBSERVER SOFTBALL TEAM**

**Pitchers:** Alicia December, senior, Livonia Churchill.

**Catchers:** Angela Montagano, junior, Redford Thurston; Jenny Clulow, senior, Livonia Churchill; Stefanie Volpe, sophomore, Plymouth Salem.

**Infielders:** Lauren Wright, senior, Redford Union; Heidi Wahl, senior, Farmington Hills Mercy; Randi Wolfe, junior, Livonia Franklin; Jenny Bauer, senior, Garden City; Stacy Judd, senior, Livonia Ladywood; Carah Best, junior, Plymouth Salem.

**Outfielders:** Jenny Sikora, junior, Plymouth Canton; Colleen Wutke, senior, Garden City; Holly Foster, senior, Farmington Harrison.

**COACH OF THE YEAR**  
Dana Hardwidge - Churchill

**SECOND TEAM**

**Pitchers:** Alana Heikkinen, junior, Farmington; Cathy Hermann, junior, Livonia Ladywood; Dana Dziekan, junior, Farmington Hills Mercy.

**Catchers:** Jackie Bayless, senior, Westland John Glenn; Amy LaGrove, junior, Plymouth Canton.

**Infielders:** Nikki Kovachevich, junior, Plymouth Canton; Kristy McDonald, junior, Redford Thurston; Sarah Rattai, junior, Farmington; Amy Finkel, senior, North Farmington; Trish Keener, senior, Garden City; Grace Allen, senior, Livonia Ladywood.

**Outfielders:** Kelly Shanks, senior, Garden City; Rachel Geiger, senior, Farmington Hills Mercy; Kristin Kozlarski, senior, Farmington Harrison; Laura Krol, senior, Livonia Stevenson.

**HONORABLE MENTION**

**Harrison:** Ari Ault, Abby Ault, Ali Ault, N. Farmington; Lynn Livernois, Mickey Spisz; Farmington; Teresa Lindenmuth, Beth Hawald, Anna Clark; Mercy; Katie Homant, Kelly Moug, Shayla O'Mara, Erin Fitzgerald.

**Ladywood:** Jessica Roman, Allison Woodruff; Stevenson: Juli Courtright, Courtney Schraufnagle, Teri Fox; Churchill: Megan McGinty, Jessie Jenkins, Tina Nair, Jennelle Mazuris; Franklin: Jessica Sabbadin, Jennifer Pushies, Lori Jendrusik.

**Clarenceville:** Nicole Reid, Nora Kohlruess, Stacey Kaminski; John Glenn: Katy Duncan, Jani Grigal, Katie Foran; Lutheran Westland: Lindsay Allen, Holly Kays, Joy Tiaran, Jessalyn Bowman, Jill Kopper, Christie Snell.

**Salem:** Jenny Storm, Nicole Sitek; Canton: Gretchen Hudson, Shelly Butske, Tara Bilo; Plymouth Christian: Lisa Erickson, Kim Rinzema, Rebekah Pugno, Carrie McCoy.

**Garden City:** Angie Hudson, Jenni Talbot; Redford Union: Melody Norman, Jamie Matosic, Kasie Mathena, Jenny Price; Thurston: Rena Laverly, Kelly Garbacz; Salina: Bess Dennis; St. Agatha: Katie Miller, Katy Wilson, Lauren Mackie.



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other. We had a lot of close games this year, but they rallied behind the seniors and never folded under pressure. Six of our seven losses were by one run, and the other loss was by only two. That's incredible in itself."

Two Churchill players were voted to the first team along with two each from Plymouth Salem and Garden City.

Several Observerland teams enjoyed success this year includ-

ing Livonia Ladywood, Westland John Glenn, Garden City, Redford St. Agatha and Farmington Hills Mercy, all district champions.

Introducing the 1996 All-Area softball team as selected by the Observer sports staff.

**FIRST TEAM**

Alicia December, pitcher, Churchill: The four-year varsity starter was the area's most improved hurler, going 22-7 with a 2.13 earned run average. She pitched in 193 innings, allowing just 25 walks to go along with 129 strikeouts. She also batted .365 en route to team MVP. All-Conference Western Lakes, All-District and second team All-Region honors.

Among her highlights this season was a perfect game against North Farmington.

"Alicia worked hard during the off-season and certainly deserves all the honors she has received," Churchill coach Dana Hardwidge said. "She is one of the most determined and dedicated athletes I have coached."

"She not only recorded 22 wins, but batted second in the lineup, constantly coming through with key base hits or need RBI. And she contributed defensively with her glove. The team responded to her leadership as captain and played with the same kind of confidence she displayed."

Jenny Clulow, catcher, Churchill: A three-year starter, the senior was the Chargers' leadoff hitter, compiling both an impressive batting average (.410) and on-base percentage (.550).

Clulow had a team-high in runs scored (42), hits (41) and stolen bases (20) to win Churchill's Best Offensive Player award.

She also showed solid defensive skills with 13 putouts and 13 assists for a .929 fielding percentage.

The Churchill backstop was voted the WLLA's top catcher to go along with All-District and second team All-Region honors.

"Because of her tremendous speed, we made Jenny into a left-handed slapper who made things happen when she was on base," Hardwidge said. "Jenny was also the stabilizing force defens-

ively, always maintaining her poise and concentration, regardless of the situation."

Angela Montagano, catcher, Thurston: The junior batted .523 (23 for 44) and had an on-base percentage of .649 in 14 division games en route to All-Mega Blue honors.

She scored 21 runs, with seven doubles, two triples and one homer.

"Angela was a hitter all year long," Thurston coach Al Nagy said. "She caught every inning of every game and never complained. She just does her job. I wish I had more like her."

Montagano, who led the Eagles to the Mega Blue Division title, was voted team MVP and made Class B All-District.

Stefanie Volpe, catcher, Salem: What Volpe did to opposing pitchers was merciless. And yet, as bad as it was, there's worse news: Volpe is just a sophomore.

Which means opponents must endure two more seasons of this: a .573 batting average; 10 doubles, five triples, seven home runs and 48 runs batted in; 43 runs scored; and just four strikeouts in 82 at-bats.

A left-handed hitter, Volpe led Salem in each of those offensive categories except doubles. She was an all-WLLA first team selection.

And her defense showed promise, as well. She started at catcher for the first time; last season, she played third base for Salem.

"She's got a real good arm," said her coach, Bonnie Southerland.

Still, it's her offense that draws raves. "She's got great bat speed," Southerland added. "She'll play in college, there's no doubt in my mind."

"You're going to hear a lot about her."

Lauren Wright, infielder, Redford Union: The senior shortstop, a first team All-Observers pick a year ago, batted over .400 with a team-leading 39 RBI.

"Lauren had a quick bat and was hard to strike out," RU coach Gary DeRoche said of the three-year starter, who bounced back after sitting out her sophomore year with knee surgery. "She delivered with people on base. Her eyes would like up."

And she made some outstanding defensive plays. She could go in the hole and throw people out because she has a great arm.

"She was our captain for two years and came to play every day. She's one of the top two players I've coached at RU (along with Andrea Roedding)."

Wright, who also stood out in volleyball and basketball, is headed to play hoops at Grand Valley State.

Heidi Wahl, infielder, Mercy: The senior shortstop was a four-year varsity regular for the Marlins, playing third base part of the time, too.

Wahl was one of Mercy's leading hitters this year with a .343 batting average, a slugging percentage of .629 and an on-base percentage of .488.

Her two dozen hits included six doubles, four triples and two home runs. Wahl had 18 RBI and scored 14 runs. She also had a .978 fielding percentage with only three errors.

Wahl was named to the All-Catholic and all-district teams and is an academic all-star.

"Without her leadership, Mercy would not have won the district championship and had the season it did," Mercy coach Jack Falvo said, recalling Wahl batted 10-for-11 and helped the Marlins win their own invitation. "She carried our team by herself; she won the tournament."

"The coaches went to Heidi in December and asked her to take control of the team and set an example, and she did that. She was our leader; the other players looked up to her."

Stacey Judd, infielder, Ladywood: The senior second baseman, headed for NCAA College World Series qualifier

Michigan, was the Blazers' foundation in the infield.

"Stacey was our best player and one of our captains," Ladywood coach Lisa Parsons said. "She was a big playmaker. She made three unassisted double plays. She was a clutch player, real consistent."

Judd batted .304 (21 for 69) with two doubles, three triples, 15 RBI and 15 runs scored.

Defensively, Judd made 65 putouts and had 55 assists for a .960 fielding percentage (only five errors). She also stole seven of eight bases.

Judd was also voted All-Catholic.

Jenny Bauer, infielder, Garden City: Bauer's emergence this season was one of the most pleasing developments for Cougar's coach Barry Patterson.

A part-time player as a junior, Bauer blossomed into an honorable mention all-state performer. She tied for the team lead in runs batted in with 29 and was second in batting average at .414. She had five doubles, two triples, and scored 29 runs.

She was equally impressive in the field, making just one error at first base. Her performance earned her selection to the all-Mega Red Division team. She was also Garden City's offensive MVP.

"Jenny had an outstanding senior year," said Patterson. "She made a big jump from last year (Bauer hit .273 as a junior), both offensively and defensively."

But her best attribute was her clutch hitting. She led Garden City with nine game-winning RBI.

"She had a lot of really big hits for us," Patterson added. "There was no one she was intimidated against. I was really proud of her improvement over the year."

Carah Best, infielder, Salem: Offensively, Best was second only to Volpe among the Rocks. Defensively, she was second to none among league shortstops.

A three-year starter at short, Best, a junior, had a team-best 11 doubles among her 29 hits. She batted .363 with one triple, two homers and 22 RBI, and scored 39 runs.

Best was an all-Lakes Division selection last year. This year, she was all-WLLA.

Said Bonnie Southerland, her coach: "She's a very smart player, with an incredible arm. She's one of the best around at shortstop."

Randi Wolfe, infielder, Franklin: The junior second baseman was voted first team All-Region, All-District and All-Conference WLLA after leading the Patriots with a .468 average (44 for 94).

She also had six doubles four triples.

Wolfe led the team in assists with 61 and made only seven errors (.941). She also won two of five games as a pitcher.

"Randi is so aggressive and so quick that she can virtually play the whole right side of the field," Franklin coach Linda Jimenez said. "She was our lead off hitter. She knows the game and has softball sense."

Colleen Wutke, outfielder, Garden City: No surprise here. Wutke, a senior, was picked for the all-Observers team for the second straight year.

She was also chosen to the all-state team for the second consecutive year. Both were earned by an athlete with an impressive array of skills.

Wutke, a senior centerfielder, hit .391 with five doubles and three triples, tying Bauer for the team lead in RBI with 29. She also scored 22 runs and stole nine bases.

"She was named to the all-Mega Red Division team once again, too."

"Colleen's just a very talented athlete," said her coach, Barry Patterson. "She's big, powerful, and has good speed - kind of the whole package."

"She's very well-respected in the

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