

# SHORT PUMP SPORTS

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## LEADERS OF THE FLOCK!

HUBLEY & SUITTE STAR FOR MID-ATLANTIC ORIOLES



Katelyn Hubley (left) and Nicholas Suitte (right) are standouts on the field who are also vocal leaders for the 14U Mid-Atlantic Orioles softball and baseball teams. Hubley has made her mark on the program as a pitcher while Suitte prefers to play shortstop.



# LEADERS OF THE FLOCK:

## HUBLEY AND SUITTE STAR FOR MID-ATLANTIC ORIOLES

By Jonathan Howard

Photos by Jessica Stone Hendricks Photography

**T**ucked in a neighborhood between Ridgfield Parkway and John Rolfe Parkway, Tuckahoe Sports Inc. boasts multiple outdoor baseball and softball fields and a massive indoor facility measuring 40,000 square feet. It's the type of place that is built to cultivate and maintain championship-level players and teams from an early age. The organization's Mid-Atlantic Orioles baseball and softball programs are designed to provide advanced travel ball experiences for players with elite skill sets. Within those programs, a pair of players have begun to set themselves apart with their skills, work ethic and potential to be great at the next level.

On the softball field, Katelyn Hubley has proven herself to be a commodity to watch. At 13, she is the youngest player on the 14U Mid-Atlantic Orioles team. However, the pitcher is defined by head coach Angelia Miller as a strong contender every time she steps on the mound and in the batter's box.

"Katelyn is very athletic and is mentally focused every time she walks on to the ball field," Miller said.

A few years ago, Miller's quotes might not have been predicted by Hubley or her parents. Katelyn's mom, Kathy, wanted to sign her daughter up for softball since she enjoyed watching older brother Bennett play Little League baseball. The



7-year-old version of Katelyn, however, did not share the same excitement in playing as watching.

"I didn't want to play. I told my mom I didn't have to do everything my brother did," Katelyn said.

The parents, however, found an incentive to get Katelyn on the softball field. Tuckahoe Little League was giving away black gloves with pink piping to new players who signed up. Katelyn fell in love with the glove, and she joined her first team, the Grasshoppers. Once she made it to her first practice, the once apprehensive player did something even more surprising – she volunteered to pitch.





<< *Katelyn Hubley didn't always want to play softball. A black and pink glove convinced her to give the sport a try.*

"At my first practice, my coach asked who pitched. I raised my hand not really knowing how to pitch," Katelyn said. "My mom was freaking out because she knew I had never pitched. I don't really know why I raised my hand. I did know that the pitcher was involved in every play, so that could have been it."

Since then, Katelyn has evolved into a fast learner, skilled player and a consistent positive presence in the dugout. Her current focus is working on her varying pitch speeds and spins.

"She is the youngest player, but with the talent she has, you would have never known," Miller said. "She is constantly asking questions to learn how to become a better pitcher and hitter and picks up things quickly when she is taught something new."

Last year Katelyn was a participant in the Major League Baseball Pitch, Hit and Run competition and was honored at Nationals Park during All-Star weekend. After winning a local competition at Tuckahoe Little League, Katelyn won sectional and regional competitions to earn an invite to Washington, D.C. While she did not place in the top three in her age bracket, she still enjoyed the experience.

"I was able to stand on the field during the pregame ceremony where they announced my name and put me on the big screen..." she said. "I was very excited and nervous to compete at the Nationals' stadium. It was a really cool experience."

The baseball version of the Mid-Atlantic Orioles has a promising leader as well. Off the field, Nicholas Suitte can be quiet and shy. However, on the diamond, the rising freshman at Hermitage High School has grown into a vocal force in the dugout.

"It is really important to be able to pick up my teammates so that everyone is on the same page," Suitte said.

Added Chris McKnight, the head coach for the 14U Mid-Atlantic Orioles and VP of baseball and softball for TSI, "Not only is Nick a talented player, but he is invested in the team. He is the first one cheering when not playing and cares about each of his teammates."

Suitte pitches and plays shortstop for the Orioles, but prefers playing the infield where he can use his voice and energy to lead the club. But, while his vocal leadership is invaluable, it



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is perhaps his work ethic to improving both his physical and mental skills that have made him an irreplaceable member of the program. Since joining up with TSI as an 11-year-old, Suitte has spent countless hours in the building and on the fields working one-on-one with coaches and teammates.

"[Suitte's] Hitting skills are above average for his age group and he has shown steady improvement in pitch selection," McKnight said. "Nick is a gap-to-gap type hitter with very good speed on the base paths. He has honed in his base running skills, particularly base stealing over the last two seasons."

His hard work at the plate paid off for his club in a Mechanicsville tournament last year in which he hit five home runs over the course of the weekend. Those gains, however, were not just made possible by his work in the batting cage. Suitte has worked hard to develop a mental edge as well. McKnight said that a separator of great players from those around them is the ability to block out bad at-bats or plays in the field and focus on the next play. Suitte has quickly become superior in this practice.

"Understanding situational baseball helps me prepare mentally for the game. In baseball, every play and every at-bat

is not going to go your way. But, if you can get 85 to 90 percent to go your way, then it's a good day," Suitte said. "Whether it's me or a teammate having a bad day, it is important to stay focused on the goal. It's important for them to see me act like someone who respects the game because if they see me keep my cool then it rubs off on them."

*<< One of the strongest skills Nicholas Suitte has on the baseball field is his ability to move past bad plays and motivate his teammates.*



The mental edge that Suitte has built has put him in a constant cycle of improvement. As he improves, his confidence grows and the more vocal he becomes with his teammates.

"The goal is to win the game and play the game right," he said. "Anyone can make a bad play or strike out. You have to let them know it's going to be alright. The best play is the next play."



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