

## Four Pioneers selected in 2019 MLB Draft

by Ryan Lewis, Altus Times

The Western Oklahoma State College Pioneers have earned quite the reputation in the baseball world.

Players who run through two years of coach Kurt Russell's program typically find a home at a four-year college or in the Major League Baseball. Those who don't simply didn't want it bad enough.

The most notable athlete to come out of Western is Andrelton Simmons, a second-round draft pick by the Atlanta Braves in 2010, who now plays shortstop for the Los Angeles Angels and has, in his eight-year career, won four Gold Gloves and finished eighth in the 2017 American League MVP voting.

While Simmons has enjoyed a long career, not every drafted Western player can say the same. Of the more than 40 athletes who have been drafted into the

majors since 2004, only a handful made it onto a big league roster and even fewer are still under contract.

The Houston Astros' Josh James is another exception.

James was drafted in the 34th round of the 2014 MLB draft but didn't debut in the majors until last year, posting a 2-0 record with an ERA of 2.35 in 23 innings pitched. This season, James is 3-0 with an ERA of 5.23 in 32.2 innings pitched.

Simmons and James could be joined in the near future by three Western players who were drafted in the 2019 MLB draft that began on Monday and ended on Wednesday.

The Washington Nationals selected two Western players with shortstop Junior Martina getting selected in the 16th round and catcher Allan Berrios getting selected in the 22nd

round.

Martina played 55 games for the Pioneers this past season and finished with a batting average of .399. He hit 14 home runs on the season and drove in 51 runs while scoring 70 times. Additionally, Martina stole 19 bases.

Berrios played in 56 games for the Pioneers this past season and finished with a batting average of .427. He hit 12 home runs on the season and drove in 58 runs while scoring 72 times. Additionally, Berrios stole 17 bases.

The Florida Marlins selected Jhonny Felix in the 21st round. Felix was a freshman at Western this past season and one of the Pioneers' more versatile players who could play infield, outfield and even pitch, if needed.

In 52 games, Felix finished the season with a

batting average of .356. He hit nine home runs on the season and drove in 48 runs while scoring 51 times. He was also one of the faster players on the team, stealing a team-high 26 bases.

The last Western player to go in the 2019 MLB draft was Dan Pruitt. The power-hitting first baseman was taken in the 38th round by the Detroit Tigers.

In 55 games, Pruitt finished with a batting average of .481. He hit 22 home runs and drove in 83 runs while scoring 78 times. Additionally, Pruitt stole 24 bases during the season, just two behind Felix.

All four players were instrumental in the Pioneers success and helped the team pick up 47 wins and just 10 losses before an early exit from the Region II tournament in May.

## Lifetime Membership is for Everyone

Mark and Meredith Thornbrough joined Western Oklahoma State College's Alumni Association as Lifetime members. Mark graduated from Western in 2005 with an associate's degree in agriculture. Meredith took classes concurrently in high school and after she graduated from Oklahoma State University with a degree in human development and family studies, she came back to Western and took prerequisites for PTA school.

"We wanted to become lifetime members to support all of the wonderful people

at Western," Meredith said. "The school is such an important part of our community and a huge asset for southwest Oklahoma. People can benefit from this amazing community college no matter where they are at in the education process."

Mark farms and Meredith works as a PTA. The Thornbroughs have three boys ages, six, three, and eight months.

If you graduated from Western, took a few classes, or just believe that Western is an important part of our community, the Alumni Association is a great way to

stay informed about what is happening at Western. Several membership options are available, including annual and lifetime. Your membership includes free admission to all of the sporting events, discounts at the gym and Western bookstore, and as a Lifetime member your name will go on our Lifetime alumni tree. This tree stands proudly in the front hallway as a reminder of those who have attended and loved Western. The greatest benefit is knowing that you are helping future students have a wonderful experience at Western.

If you would like more information about joining call the Development and Alumni Office at 477-7706. The Western Oklahoma State College Foundation provides the opportunity to invest in the future by offering many ways to give. The WOSC Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c) 3 organization and exists to generate support for the students and programs of Western Oklahoma State College. For more information on the WOSC Foundation and ways to give, visit wosc.edu/give.

**WELLNESS SYMPOSIUM & HEALTH FAIR**

JUNE 27 | 8:30A - 5:00P  
WESTERN OKLAHOMA STATE COLLEGE

Hosted by: Great Plains Literacy Council, Jackson County Health Department, & Western Oklahoma State College

Get Social with Western!



## Ward's freshman season is just the beginning

by Ryan Lewis, Altus Times

Recruiting athletes is tough for any junior college sports program but is especially tough for a small southwest Oklahoma college located in a place many people might not have heard of before.

One recruit was Cache's Rosie Ward, but as it turns out, the catcher needed very little convincing. Western Oklahoma State College's distance from her hometown was just one reason, but she had plenty of others, too.

"My sisters played at Western," Ward said, "and I wanted to go there. I'm used to small schools being from Cache, and I just wanted to stay close and in a small-town atmosphere."

So she committed, made Western her home and excelled.

On a team that batted a collective .325 on the season, Ward was a superstar.

Along with Marilyn Alvarado, Ward provided a consistent boost to Western's offense, becoming one of the team's biggest run producers with 29 runs batted in, 44 runs scored and a batting average of .410.

On Tuesday, the hard-hitting duo was recognized as First Team All-Region players.

With the accolades, you wouldn't think it was that hard of a transition from

high school to college softball but Ward said it took some getting used to in the beginning.

"It's faster paced," Ward said, "and more intense. I played with pretty much the same girls since I started playing softball, and I had to learn how to play with all new teammates. It was challenging but it was a learning experience."

Immediately upon arriving at Western, Ward and her teammates dove headfirst into Genny and Jerod Stidham's brand of softball.

Ward said the early going was difficult as the player's acclimated to being around each other. Because the team didn't play a game until February, Ward said most of her time with her teammates was spent on the practice field or in the weight room.

"The first couple of weeks," Ward said, "it felt strange. Once we started practicing, we all felt more relaxed and got to know each other and we all became good friends. Practice time felt like our whole lives."

The hours upon hours of practice and bonding showed on the field once the season began. Through the team's first eight games, the Lady Pioneers didn't lose once.

During that same

stretch, the Lady Pioneers scored 93 runs, 22 more runs than the 2018 team did in 54 games.

In that eight-game stretch, Ward's presence was felt immediately. She finished 16-of-27 with 14 runs scored and 12 RBIs.

The Lady Pioneers appeared to be unstoppable.

"We played together," Ward said. "We learned each other's strengths and weaknesses and we built on that."

But then something unexpected happened and everything was turned upside down.

In a home game against Clarendon, star pitcher Cheyenne Mahy was sliding into second base when she connected with the base and her leg snapped. The injury put Mahy out for the season and affected Ward deeply.

"Being the catcher," Ward said, "it was a tough pill to swallow. Having to adjust to another pitcher after months of practicing with Cheyenne made things a little difficult. The whole team seemed to go into somewhat of a downward spiral for a while."

The Lady Pioneers lost seven straight games before snapping the losing streak with a win over Northern Oklahoma College Tonkawa on March 26.

The team bounced

back and forth between winning and losing until a nine-game losing streak threatened to derail what was once a promising season.

But eventually, the Lady Pioneers started to figure it out again and string together wins rather than losses.

Throughout it all, Ward was a constant threat at the plate. She said she was able to maintain her consistency thanks to lessons she was taught at a young age.

"I played little league baseball," Ward said, "for a couple of years under coach Rodney DeLong Sr. He was such a good coach on teaching fundamentals and those lessons allowed me to maintain my consistency."

The Lady Pioneers finished the year with a 23-27 record and Ward was a key reason for that.

She said she expects the team to be just as good, if not better, next season as the coaches and players continue to work on correcting any mistakes made this season and welcome in the new recruits.

"Our coaches are committed to winning," Ward said. "They have recruited some great players and I think the new talent combined with those of us who are staying will make us a team to be feared."

### UPCOMING AT WESTERN

- June 26: Summer Enrollment Event
- June 27: First 4-week summer classes end
- July 1: Second 4-week summer classes begin
- July 4: Independence Day, College Closed
- July 29: Summer Semester ends

**ENROLLMENT EVENT**  
JUNE 26 | 12 - 5:30

GET AHEAD AND GET ENROLLED AT OUR SUMMER ENROLLMENT EVENT!

- Join us for lunch and ice cream sundaes
- Meet with an adviser
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- Be entered for a chance to win a \$200 gift certificate to the Western Bookstore

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Western Oklahoma State College  
**BASKETBALL CAMP**

JUNE 26 - 28 | 9A - 12P  
BOYS & GIRLS | AGES 8 - 17  
\$70 PER CAMPER

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