



Spring 3-8-2000

## Young, Versatile Titan Softball Team Opens Season Saturday

Stew Salowitz  
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news>

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Salowitz, Stew, "Young, Versatile Titan Softball Team Opens Season Saturday" (2000).  
*News and Events*. 757.  
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/757>

This Article is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@iwu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@iwu.edu).

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

8 March 2000

**CONTACT:** Stew Salowitz, (309) 556-3206

## **Young, Versatile Titan Softball Team Opens Season Saturday**

**BLOOMINGTON, Ill.** — Eight letterwinners and a class of talented freshmen have formed into a versatile group of interchangeable parts, comprising this spring's Illinois Wesleyan University softball team.

The Titans, who were 27-12-1 overall and 9-5 in College Conference of Illinois and Wisconsin play in 1999, open play Saturday at 9 a.m. against Cazenovia in the Rebel Spring Games in Orlando, Fla.

Leading the returning players are senior co-captains Beth Keller and Christie Evitt, along with senior shortstop/catcher Jackie Kloiber.

Keller, a second baseman from Normal (Community HS), was IWU's "Most Improved Player" last spring when she hit .345 with eight doubles and three triples while leading the team in steals for the second straight year with 20. After three seasons Keller is No. 11 all-time at IWU in doubles (13), triples (6), and No. 18 in hits (86), while her career .343 average is eighth best in school records.

Evitt (Naperville, Oak Lawn Community HS), a catcher/third baseman, was second on last year's team with a .364 batting mark, cracking three home runs with four doubles.

Kloiber (Tinley Park HS) led IWU in hitting for the second straight year with her .365 mark and scored a team-high 30 runs. After three seasons, Kloiber ranks No. 10 in hits (113), No. 5 in triples (13), No. 8 in runs scored (85), and No. 7 in batting average (.349) among IWU career leaders.

"Our seniors are great leaders and have been setting terrific examples in practice," said IWU coach Mandy Neal. "The fact that Jackie and Christie are able to play different positions gives our team many options this spring."

Other returning starters include juniors Becky Stenning (Monee, Crete-Monee HS) and Sara Powers (Manhattan, Lincoln-Way HS). Stenning, who will pitch and play either first or third, batted .323 last spring and was 3-0 with a 3.04 earned run average.

Powers, a leftfielder, batted .345 and had a team-high 15 doubles in 1999.

The balance of the position players will be filled by virtual newcomers, including sophomore Laura Jones (Canton HS) and freshman Stephanie Hieser (Minier, Stanford Olympia HS) in centerfield and rightfield, respectively. The speedy Jones batted .360 and stole 10 bases in limited appearances last spring.

Another freshman, Stephanie Stephen (Martinsville, Casey-Westfield HS), will help in the outfield when she recovers from a back injury. As a senior, Stephen was an all-stater and batted .389 with three home runs with 27 runs batted in for 1999 Class A state champion Casey-Westfield.

Sophomore Kate Molina (Skokie, Loyola Academy) can play first base and freshman Megan Pietrucha (Orland Hills, Andrew HS) can play the outfield and fill in at shortstop for Kloiber when she catches.

Freshmen Kristin Scott (Bloomington, Central Catholic HS) and Anna Schaafsma (Momence HS) are others who could help in the infield, while sophomore Kristen Prather (St. Joseph, St. Joseph-Ogden HS) and Stefanie Bonato (McHenry, Deerfield HS) are outfielders.

"As of the start of the season, I know for sure who will play leftfield and second base," Neal said. "The rest of the positions can be filled by any number of people because we are so versatile, which I see a really positive thing for this team."

The Titans' pitching is a question mark with the graduation of 18-game winner Jennifer Hayes and Debbie Duden, who made 18 starts last year. In addition to Stenning, sophomores Mandi Cioni (Granville, Putnam County HS) and Sarah Englehardt (Yorkville HS) saw very little action last spring, appearing in a total of three games.

Freshmen A.J. Reeley (Danville HS) and Ellen Furr (Newark HS) will be counted on heavily. Reeley was 16-2 with 102 strikeouts in 117 2/3 innings as a senior and was named "Player of the Year" in both Champaign and Danville areas. Furr, a lefthander, was 14-9 and fanned 175 batters while walking only seven in 152 innings last spring.

"We're obviously young and untested in pitching and need to gain experience quickly," said Neal. "The freshmen have really worked hard making the adjustment to the college distance (43 feet instead of 40) and the Florida trip will be a great learning experience for them, as well as for me to assess their skills in games."