

# HUDSON VALLEY SPORTS

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## SHOULDER INJURY THREATENS TO DERAILED PITCHER

### Former FDR starter getting ready for college

BY CHRISTOPHER LENNON

FDR High School softball team's former starting pitcher, Jen Reitemeyer, thought she was suffering a pulled muscle when her team travelled to Myrtle Beach for a tournament early last season, but when the pain became so unbearable she couldn't pitch, she knew the problem was more severe.

"It felt like a pulled muscle, but if you pressed on it, it was very sore," Reitemeyer said. "(My coach) put me in and I couldn't bear it. I had to let someone else pitch."

As it turned out, Reitemeyer had torn her labrum – the cartilage that lines the surface of the shoulder joint – and would need to undergo surgery and months of physical therapy before she could think about throwing a softball again.

Reitemeyer, who had secured an athletic scholarship to attend East Stroudsburg University, had to make a difficult decision – sit out her senior-year softball season while she recovered, or risk further compounding her injury and possibly never throwing another softball. She decided to seek treatment in hopes of being ready to play her freshman year at East Stroudsburg.

Reitemeyer underwent surgery for her torn labrum with Dr. Spyros Panos of Mid Hudson Medical Group. She said the surgery involved making three small incisions in her arm so the doctor could reattach the torn ligaments.

From there, she was put in a sling and ordered not to move her arm for a month.

"I had to sleep on the couch; I had to sleep on my side," she explained. "I couldn't do anything."

Next, she sought treatment from a physical therapist. She decided on Dr. David Sucato of Northern Dutchess Hospital Physical and Occupational Therapy in Hyde Park, who she had worked with before on more minor injuries.

"He has a very good reputation," Reitemeyer said. "He was perfect."

Sucato did some research and found a protocol for working with pitchers.

"My goal was to get her ready to play college softball," Sucato said.

Sucato explained that Reitemeyer's shoulder didn't have the range of motion it normally would, so the two worked together on movement exercises and eventually built up to strength training.

"Initially, she had pain," he said. "We had to work with what she could tolerate."

The doctor and patient spent time throwing a softball back and forth in the field behind Sucato's Crum Elbow Road office and worked with the Jenny Finch Windmill, a shoulder exerciser that mimics a pitching motion.

Reitemeyer and Sucato worked together for eight weeks – Reitemeyer's physical therapy sessions just ended last week.



Dr. David Sucato and Jen Reitemeyer. Photo by Christopher Lennon.

Today, Sucato says things are looking good for Reitemeyer and she should eventually be able to pitch just as well as she did prior to tearing her labrum.

"I started throwing overhand a few weeks ago," Reitemeyer said. "I'm slowly starting to pitch."

By the time this article is published, Reitemeyer will have already left for college. She plans on trying out for the softball team on Sept. 7, though she has already told the East Stroudsburg coach of her situation and is not planning on pitching the fall season. She'll also be continuing therapy with the school's physical therapist, working with weights and weighted balls.

When asked if she thought she'd be ready to pitch in time for the spring season, Reitemeyer responded, "That's the plan. I've been progressing pretty well."

Reitemeyer says the experience has taught her that the age-old advice coaches give pitchers – such as the importance of stretching and icing your shoulder – should be followed.

Sucato says he's proud of Reitemeyer and wishes her well.

"The fact that she's doing everything pain-free was probably really rewarding for her, but it is very rewarding for me too," he said. "I think she's a great athlete and she's going to do well in college."

## SPORTS STUFF BY JAY KENNEDY

- There's a teaching pro out there who calls himself "The Surge," as in swing surgeon, who claims he can fix Tiger Woods' swing in half an hour. He says all Woods has to do is widen his stance, firm up his knees and not move his head as much. Thanks, Surge! I wonder how much time "The Surge" would need to fix my horrendous swing.
- Foul-mouthed Serena Williams will not play in the U.S. open this year after injuring her foot in a German restaurant a few months ago. That must have come as good news for all the linesmen and women dreading another encounter

with Miss Charming.

- The Yankees did the right thing by putting Alex Rodriguez on the 15-day disabled list. The Yankees are in the playoffs one way or another, so why risk A-Rod's calf by playing him.
- Can't believe anyone thinks George Steinbrenner should be in the Hall of Fame and Pete Rose should not. Steinbrenner was a twice-convicted felon and twice suspended from the game. Pete Rose simply banged out more hits than any player who ever lived.

- The Jaybird's finding some of these Little League World Series games a little much, particularly the managers and umpires. Guys, it's a bunch of kids, not the seventh game of the real World Series. Lighten up.
- Speaking of the Little League World Series, it appears Saudi Arabia is better at oil and terrorism than baseball. They had to halt their game with Taiwan in the fourth inning at 18-0 because of the 10-run rule. But they probably traveled in style.

- Alabama opens the season at number one, according to the Associated Press pre-season poll. Those polls are usually proven wrong, but they do mean one thing ... it's almost football season!
- The Jaybird wants to hear from anyone who has watched even one minute of the WNBA this year. My God, they must be hemorrhaging money. I still say their only chance for survival is to play during the real basketball season and take their chances. They couldn't do worse. Or have them play topless or in bikinis and that'll sell some tickets!