

# Softball's seniors: Still going out with style

**Troy Adams**  
*The Pendulum*

Ground ball after ground ball—they keep plugging away.

Cleat to the shin, twisted knee, hit by a pitch, cuts, bruises, blood, sweat and tears—they keep plugging away.

8-0 wins or 0-8 losses—they keep plugging away.

The Elon softball team is struggling. Struggling, but still kicking, fighting and screaming.

On the verge of the worst season in recent memory, the softball team is still taking its swings at some sort of success.

But for five softball players, there will be no more swings.

No more foul balls off the toes (\*#@\$!). No more base hits after fouling five straight pitches to stay in the box.

"It's kinda sad knowing that I won't ever play again—not as competitive as it's supposed to be," senior Jen Warren said. "It'll be just for fun now.

"I won't play with this team that I've played with ever again. We'll never be out there together."

For the time they did spend on East Field together, they've made the most of it.

Holly Briel, Kelly Lloyd and Evie Benson have been playing softball all four years at Elon. Warren began playing her sophomore year. All four will graduate in May.

Colleen Lally will be forging her senior year to student teach. So, while not graduating, this will be her last season also.

But for the four seniors, they have seen and done it all.

They have went from playing teams like Catawba, Lenoir-Rhyne, Wingate and Gardner-Webb to teams such as UNC-Chapel Hill (and beating them), Virginia, Geor-

gia Tech and nationally ranked University of Southern Florida.

"It's a whole different caliber of ball," Briel said.

On top of that, the players have seen Elon's NCAA affiliation change, head coaches change and drastic improvements in their playing field.

In 1995-

96 when the current seniors first arrived, East Field had benches for dugouts, a fence backstop, no lining on the fence surrounding the field and no bullpen.

Now it has the bullpen, the fence lining and both brick dugouts and a concrete backstop.

"Then it really was pretty crappy," Briel said. "Now, it's really a beautiful field.

"Only three players have been through (all these changes). Only three have played with four different classes of people."

Players have come and gone over the years and now it's time for these seniors to go. But in between coming and going, they sure have left a mark.

Lloyd, who plays shortstop, currently holds 15 Elon records and is only one RBI and 13 assists away from making that total 17.

Aside from her records, though, she is also a leader both on and off the field.

"She's probably like our

mother," junior pitcher Gina Krueger said. "If anyone has a question, they go to Kelly. She's gonna know what to do."

Briel has filled in every roll possible for the Fightin' Christians. She has caught, played right field, center field and filled in at short-

stop. And she loves every minute of it.

"I've played more positions in this season than in many years combined," she said. "I kinda like it. Sometimes it gets boring playing the same position. It's good to have change for me on the field sometimes...but I love to catch."

There is much more than just Elon softball to these players lives, though. And while their

collegiate experience is ending, it's not the end of it all.

In a weird sort of way, these players are all connected outside of Elon.

Briel has filled in for Lloyd, her roommate, at shortstop. Shortstop is the position she plays in summer league ball. The only other senior to play intense summer ball is Warren. She plays for a very popular and prestigious summer program, The Shamrocks.

Both player's teams compete in the Amateur Softball Association (ASA).

Warren and Briel will con-



Emily MacDonnell/The Pendulum

**Senior Kelly Lloyd is one of four seniors for the Fightin' Christians. She holds 15 Elon records and is set to break two more.**

tinue softball after college in that extent, while Lloyd will try to play professionally. But Briel is also trying to get Lloyd to play ASA ball this summer.

"We have the same love for the game," Briel said. "That's hard to find because at this level especially it often becomes more of a job, just time consuming."

It's hard to replace the connections these four have made on and off the field, both among themselves and with their younger teammates.

"(Holly and I) just clicked," Warren said. "We knew when each other would get the ball. A lot of times, it's hard to find someone who you don't have to say anything to and you still know they'll get the ball."

"Ever since I've been here, Kelly, Jen and Holly have been on the field every time I've been out there," Krueger said. "They are big leaders, girls who drive and moti-

vate everybody. They are all really knowledgeable of the game and know their positions really well."

Warren is revered by her teammates as one of the most dependable and consistent players. Briel is described as intense and one of the best utility players Elon has ever seen. Lloyd is talented, dedicated and helpful. Benson is leads by example and Lally puts things in perspective and focus.

All five will go out winners, no matter what the record says. And each will both take part of Elon softball with them, and leave part of themselves here as well.

"The number one thing that has made Elon a true college experience has been the great personal bonds I've made with my teammates," Lloyd said. "It's been my niche in life here.

(Softball) has been my happy getaway from stresses. It's the point of the day I look forward to. I wouldn't trade it for the world."

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