



IN THE GAME

with Linda Derk

An Ordinary Kid...Ready to be *Extraordinary* April Ortenzo

When you meet April Ortenzo she seems like your ordinary high school student-athlete. She likes to go to school, play sports, hang with friends, go the beach and listen to music...but when you get to know her you quickly realize this ordinary kid is ready to be extraordinary!

April, a senior from Parkland, Florida is an excellent student-athlete at Cardinal Gibbons High School (CBH). She is a member of the National Honor Society and a two-sport standout (soccer and softball) at the school. She has been the starting shortstop for CBH, has led the team in hitting, and has received the Outstanding Player Award each year since her freshman year.

Recently, April signed the National Letter of Intent to play softball at the United States Military Academy at West Point (Army). Major colleges around the country for softball AND soccer heavily

recruited her but April had decided to decline all interest in college soccer to play DI softball. April selected West Point (DI) for its outstanding athletic program, career opportunities and as one of the most prestigious academic institutions in the United States. West Point was recently ranked by Forbes magazine as number one academically among all U.S. colleges.

Furthermore, the senior four-year varsity softball and soccer player has been named the 2010 "National Female High School Athlete of the Year" for all Catholic High Schools in the United States. The selection is made by Sports Faith International in association with the National Collegiate Scouting Association and is



chaired by Chicago Bears owner Patrick McCaskey. April was selected from 750 nominees throughout the Nation. She was inducted into the "Catholic Sports Hall of Fame" in February at the Chicago Bears Halas Hall.

For the last two seasons I have had the opportunity to coach April Ortenzo. She is the starting shortstop on the Florida Fury Elite 18U softball team.

When she told me she was interested in West Point I could not have been prouder. It is seldom you find a young woman of this caliber that wants the challenge of a military academy.

Part of the process to receive a nomination to West Point is to submit a personal statement as to why you want to be a cadet. I had the privilege of reading the statement. With all the academic and athletic accomplishments what impresses me the most is the person she is. To her, sports is her tool to position herself to help others.

I quote a portion of April's personal statement: "Only recently has the West Point Military Academy started to become a reality in my life. There are many reasons pertaining to why I would like to have the honor of attending the academy. All my life I have wanted to become a part of something more. Something more than just an average person, average job or average lifestyle that doesn't challenge me to become the strongest, both physically and mentally, possible. My main goal in life is to help other

people. I feel it is what I am meant to do. I realize the honor and commitment it takes to become a cadet. It would be, by far, the biggest honor and greatest opportunity of my lifetime to be able to serve the country that I live in and love."

Well, it is clear that April Ortenzo is the diamond in the rough. The person ready to clear the path and not walk in the one already made. This is a young woman with the world at her fingertips... I am proud to be her coach and I know she will make a positive difference in this world. April is the daughter of Al and Nancy Ortenzo. She has an older brother Paul who played baseball at Furman University in South Carolina.