



Tayler Hope Signs With Southwestern Illinois College, Will Bring Enthusiasm, Team-First Attitude To School

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
January 4 2021 3:50 PM



EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville softball player Tayler Hope recently signed a letter-of-intent to attend Southwestern Illinois College in Belleville and play for the Blue Storm in a ceremony held at the high school.

Hope, a reserve utility player, will be playing for head coach Mike Juenger at SWIC, and is very excited to play for the school and stay close to home and family. She decided to start out in the junior college route for a very simple reason.

"I know, with everything's going on, it's probably better not to go straight into a big school, and I want to do what's best for me and my family," Hope said in an interview before the ceremony, "and I knew that going far away wasn't the best choice. So, maybe the last two years, but the first two, I just wanted to play softball."

Hope will be bringing a lot to the Blue Storm in the 2022 season.

"Motivation," Hope said, "and my confidence, I think. Just trying to boost everyone up. I'm more like a team player," she said with a laugh.

Edwardsville head coach Lori Blade knows that Hope is a hard-working player who adds much to any team.

"We're right back at it, and she'll be a role player for us," Blade said, "who does some really good things, is a great program with a good attitude who works hard, always has, has battled through some injuries over the years. So hopefully, she can stay healthy and get a great opportunity in front for this year."

Hope and her family moved to Edwardsville from Florida years ago, and Blade has watched Hope progress over the years into a dependable player.

"She is a great kid, love to be around," Blade said. "She came in, moved in from Florida when we'd already started middle school, and she fit in really well, wasn't hesitant. Like I said, has gone through a lot, and just has continued to keep her positive attitude that she had, and on the right path of making the right decisions, which is a big deal."

Blade also thinks that Hope will bring much to SWIC's team.

"She'll bring, just with our experience coming from the program, I think she'll fit in and challenge there right there right away for some playing time," Blade said. "She can play multiple positions, and then has a good bat. She's just got to stay healthy."

Hope also considered Lewis and Clark Community College in Godfrey, focusing on junior colleges in her search, and will get her required classes done before she moves on to a four-year school, and plans on majoring in communication sciences, with an emphasis on speech pathology. Staying at home and close to her family was a very important factor in her decision to attend SWIC.

"My stepdad is actually in the hospital with a brain tumor," Hope said, so staying at home was definitely important."

After finishing her associate's degree at SWIC, Hope is looking at possibly Missouri State in Springfield.

"I just love the campus and everything they do there," Hope said. "Maybe there, honestly, do another D-III, D-II."

Hope, as with all the Tiger players, missed out on the 2020 season after it was cancelled because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but she's hoping to bounce back in the 2021 season, if there is one.

"Yeah, if we had a season this year, hopefully, it can be longer than what we had last year," Hope said with a laugh. "Last year, we just got to practice, and everyone was super excited. But now, I know we're doing open field practices for softball, so doing that kind of, even if it's not a game or anything, it's the closest we can get at the moment, so anything's good."

Hope also had a favorite memory of playing for the Tigers, which involved a postgame ritual.

"Just after the games, just everyone being super excited," Hope said, "and everyone just going into a huddle and talking about everything that happened in the game and our best moments. That's probably my favorite. More like the cheers we do," Hope added with a laugh.

It's another big signing for the Edwardsville softball program, which continues to produce very good players, and Blade is very proud of Hope and her accomplishments.

"Very much so, very much so," Blade said. "I'm proud of the path she's stayed on, and I know it hasn't been easy for her. But she's headed in the right direction with a wonderful opportunity in front of her, and hopefully, she'll take advantage of that."

And Hope is also looking forward for the chance of taking advantage of the opportunity and doing well.

"Yes, 100 percent," Hope said. "My senior year, so," she said with a laugh. "Just happy to be in school at the moment."