

# Honeycutt is Knights' first softball recruit

by Ed Phillips



*Paige Honeycutt (front right) signs her letter of intent as the first softball recruit in the history of Surry Community College as Knights coach Amber Reid (left) looks on. (Back row, from left to right) Paige's father, her sister, Brooke, East Surry coach Derrick Hill, Paige's mother, Ann, and Cardinals baseball coach Barry Hall.*

PILOT MOUNTAIN — Paige Honeycutt has always been ahead of the pack. As a youngster, she tended to play above her age group on her sister's softball teams. She was the starting catcher for East Surry her first season at the school. On Friday, Honeycutt continued the trend by signing on to play at Surry Community College as the first softball recruit in school history.

“I’ve seen her through the years and, obviously, she’s the kind of player you want on your team, in numerous ways,” Surry Coach Amber Reid said. “I was pumped when we had the opportunity to start recruiting and she was the first person I thought of.”

The scholarship Honeycutt received is good for two years, at \$1,500 per year. The only expenses she incurs will be books.

Honeycutt will leave quite a legacy behind at East Surry. Derrick Hill, who has coached the East Surry softball team for 13 years, called Honeycutt the best catcher he has ever coached. Her bat was just as potent as her defense.

“She turned out to be one of the best hitters we’ve ever had,” Hill said, “especially as a clutch hitter. If you put her in a situation when we’re tied or down one, she’s going to get a hit, and that’s something you can’t teach.”

Where Honeycutt especially shined was the Cardinals’ state-title run last season, three years after her older sister, Brooke, won Most Valuable Player honors in the same tournament.

“From the time we got to the state tournament in Raleigh,” Hill said, “she was hitting bb’s all over the field. Nobody could get her out. She’s just a big-game player. She’s more likely to get a hit when the score’s 2-1 or 1-1 than when it’s 10-0.”

Honeycutt’s bat has not cooled off since. She sports her team’s third-best batting average, hitting at a .385 clip. She has knocked in 10 runs so far, with a homer, two triples and two doubles. Her fielding percentage is perfect.

“For the most part, she’s called the pitches all year,” Hill said, adding that is a most unusual situation. “She knows the pitchers well, she knows what’s working well. She pays attention to little things like that. I’ve probably called 10 pitches all year.”

What Honeycutt has done this season, she did against a background of family turmoil. Her mother, Ann, is battling Leukemia. Honeycutt has had to juggle her priorities like never before, as she helps out around the house and still finds time for softball and to excel in the classroom. Honeycutt’s decision to stay close to home has resonated with her mother.

“It’s very important with my condition,” Ann Honeycutt said. “I’m really glad she can be here and wants to be close.”

Ann will be watching a confident woman next season. Honeycutt is excited to play at the next level and ready to step on the field immediately, just like she did four years ago at East Surry.

“I’ve played traveling ball for a really long time,” Honeycutt said, explaining why she will not be overwhelmed by the collegiate game. “18-and-under is pretty much college ball. All those girls are looking to play in college and a lot of them already signed to play in college. It’s like playing a cherry-picked team.”

On those traveling teams, Honeycutt played one year ahead of where she was supposed to with her sister Brooke, who is 21 to Paige’s 18, and Reid’s younger sister, Shawn Watson, a pitcher at Surry. Reid’s father coached a few of those teams. Honeycutt said playing with the older girls helped her develop a sharp softball intellect and determination.

“I always felt I had something to prove,” she said. “I knew I had to earn my spot.”

Reid, who starred on East Surry’s first state championship team, hopes the addition of Honeycutt can boost recruiting in the softball-rich area of Surry County. The Knights’ roster features nine players, the minimum amount needed to field a team.

“I really do think there’s a lot of local talent and we could get a good ball team from that alone,” Reid said. “One of the things I want to do is fill the team with local players.”

Honeycutt not only fills the local quota, but continues a legacy started by Brooke, who

will attend Winston-Salem State in the fall. Paige said she wants to enter an architectural program. Hill expects Honeycutt to stand out no matter what she is doing.

“She does what she’s supposed to do in the classroom, which is a big thing,” he said. “She’s just a good kid and that is a product of her mother and father and her sister, too. We’re happy to see her go get a chance to play at the next level and there’s no doubt in my mind she can be successful. There’s no doubt she’s going to make that team better and that’s why Amber wants her.”