



BASEBALL

## Female Miami Dade College softball player gets noticed by MLB

BY WALTER VILLA  
*Special to the Miami Herald*

January 11, 2018 04:24 PM

Melissa Mayeux, a freshman from France, has yet to play an official softball game — at any level — yet she will be the starting shortstop and hit in the middle of the Miami Dade College batting order this season.

How did Mayeux get so good at softball despite no experience?

Here's how: She grew up playing baseball with and against boys in France and was the only female on the French Under-18 Junior National Team.

She's so talented that Major League Baseball took notice of her.

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Melissa Mayeux, a Miami Dade College freshman from France, recently became the first female player added to MLB's international registration list.

**SARAH MAITLAND** - Photo provided to the Miami Herald

Former major-league stars Barry Larkin and Steve Finley have worked with her at camps, and she recently became the first female player added to MLB's international registration list.

In other words, she is now eligible to be signed by a Major League Baseball organization.

But, until or unless that happens, she will happily play softball for MDC, where she's on scholarship.

"She's good," MDC coach Gina DeAgüero said. "She's athletic, and she's really good at making adjustments right then and there."

Adjustments will be needed since there are many differences between baseball and softball.

For example, baseball pitchers throw overhand, use a smaller ball and the distance between the mound and home plate is 60 feet, 6 inches. Softball pitchers throw underhand, use a bigger ball, and the distance between the mound and home is 43 feet.

And that short of a distance can be fairly uncomfortable for batters who are new to the game such as Mayeux.

"When (softball pitchers) stride out, they are at 37 feet," DeAgüero said. "We go against girls who can throw 65 or 66 miles per hour."

DeAgüero said Mayeux has above-average speed as a runner, as well as home run power. But she still needs to fine tune her softball skills.

"She has to get used to throwing the softball — it weighs differently," said DeAgüero, who has never coached a player with Mayeux's baseball background.

Besides throwing, the other defensive adjustment Mayeux will have to make is to learn to charge the ball more because the distance from home to first base is shorter than in baseball.



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**Miami Dade College** - Photo provided to the Miami Herald

MDC third baseman Eliza Artiles said Mayeux has made major strides since arriving in Miami this past fall.

"People think that baseball and softball are so similar and playing one or the other should be easy," Artiles said. "Down to the mechanics and the basics, it is (similar), but there are some differences such as the timing of the pitches.

"In the beginning, (Mayeux) struggled a little bit with her timing (as a hitter). But her mechanics are perfect, and she has always had a positive attitude. She's made a lot of advancements in very little time."

Artiles said Mayeux, who has good height for the game at 5-8, is quicker than she looks.

That agility, Mayeux said, will be needed in softball.

"The field is smaller," Mayeux said. "I need to make that transition. In baseball, a shortstop (stands further back).

"It's a little bit hard, but I'm lucky I have good coaches."

Meanwhile, Mayeux hasn't given up on her baseball dreams. But she isn't pushing so hard that she oversteps her place, either.

In other words, even though she's met MDC baseball coach Danny Price, she's not about to ask for a tryout.

"I don't really want to go over there and say, 'I want to play baseball. Take me on the team'," she said. "I'm just waiting. If he needs me, I'm here."

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