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## Miami Dade's Mayeux Hoping To Land Division I Scholarship



(Photo courtesy of Miami Dade)

By [Lindsay Berra](#)  
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Frenchwoman Melissa Mayeux made history in June of 2015, when the then-teenage shortstop on the French U-18 junior national team became the first female baseball player added to MLB's international registration list, making her eligible to be signed by a big-league club. In 2017, she made the decision to switch to softball so she could attend an American university.

Now, just a few months away from earning her Associates of Arts degree from Miami Dade College, Mayeux is hoping to land a Division I softball scholarship.

“There is no doubt in my mind that she can play at the Division I level,” says Miami Dade head softball coach Gina Deaguero. “Anyone who comes to watch her play can see she has the talent and the temperament to compete and do well at a big school.”

Despite Miami Dade's losing record in 2018, Mayeux, now 20, had a stellar debut season. She had a team-leading .377 batting average with eight home runs, 15 doubles, 31 RBI and a .715 slugging percentage. She made first-team All-Southern Conference along with the all-academic team.

"She was my best hitter by far," Deaguero says. "There was always something she did offensively to keep us in the game."

All that while adapting to a bigger ball, a lighter bat, a smaller field and a new language in a new country; Mayeux had never set foot in the United States before starting school at Miami Dade and had only played softball a handful of times as a teenager in France.

Mayeux had to adjust to the upward angle of softball pitches and the more balanced weight distribution in the softball swing, but her perfect swing mechanics made her a quick study. "Instead of going under the ball, it's more right to the ball," she says. "The ball comes more quickly in softball, but I'm used to it now. I'm seeing the ball better." The biggest challenge? "The riser. It's so tempting to swing at it but it's almost impossible to hit."

On defense, throwing the bigger ball across the smaller field was also initially a challenge. "It was hard at the beginning, especially to throw from deep in the hole at shortstop, when I felt I needed to throw very hard," she says. "I would throw the ball into the stands."

Now, though, Mayeux is displaying veteran on-field smarts. "She moves so well on defense," Deaguero says. "Softball is a little quicker than baseball and plays can sneak up on you, especially with rundowns and steals, but she is so quick-thinking. She rotates and fills in, often when it's not even her cover."

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Through 12 games this season, the Lady Sharks are 3-9 and Mayeux is hitting .314 with three doubles, a home run and five RBIs. It is not quite the start Mayeux was hoping for, but Deaguero is hopeful things will improve. The talent on Miami Dade's roster is spread more evenly through the order this season, which means Mayeux will see better pitching as other teams have to work hard to keep her teammates off the basepaths. Mayeux says her goals are to hit over .350 for the season and to continue to improve her defense every time she steps on the field.

While playing softball at Miami Dade, Mayeux continues to attend baseball events around the country, seamlessly transitioning between the two sports. In the past, she has worked with several former Major Leaguers, including two-time All-Star Steve Finley and Hall of Famer Barry Larkin, at MLB's international baseball development camps. "She has a killer instinct and she works her rear-end off," Finley recalls.

Last fall, Mayeux was hand-chosen, along with 35 other women, to attend an elite camp in Chicago, organized by the International Women's Baseball Center. Paul Stevens, who was the head baseball coach at Northwestern University for 28 years and is now an assistant at the University of Chicago, was tasked with working with the infielders.

"This young lady has an arm," Stevens says of Mayeux. "She understands the mechanics of the throwing motion and she understands her body, and that fluency translates to both sports. She is extremely athletic, she has tremendous hands, she is positive and inquisitive and she listens. She can make adjustments as well as any player I've been around."

Mayeux's ability to keep a level head has also been impressive to Deaguero. Last season, she was hardly fazed by the local news crews who came to Lady Sharks' practices and games to do stories on their new international phenom. At the Women's Baseball World Cup in Viera, FL last August, famed director Francis Ford Coppola, a long-time supporter of women's baseball, sought Mayeux out to introduce himself. "I was beside myself," Deagueuro recalls. "But Melissa just goes with the flow."

Another asset? Mayeux's grades. Despite the language barrier, her marks are stellar - mostly As with a few scattered Bs, - proving she can balance athletics and academics, which is essential at a Division I school.

"I came to America for opportunities I wouldn't have in France," Mayeux says. "First, I'd like to go the FCSAA State Tournament with Miami Dade and win. Then, I would like to go to a big university to continue with my softball and my education."