

# Sports & Entertainment

## Softball coach Trena Prater welcomes nine to 2026 signing class

MEMPHIS, Tenn., November 14, 2025 – Memphis Softball head coach Trena Prater announced nine student-athletes that have signed to play softball starting in the 2027 season. The class of nine spans six states and includes multiple connections between the student-athletes through their club teams.

"Overall, this 2026 recruiting class is packed with a lot of speed and two-way impact players," Prater said. "They will come in and make an instant impact for us to be a championship-contending team."

**Aniya Arnold | Freshman | Shortstop | Arkansas High School | Texarkana, Ark.**

Arnold joins the Tigers after a successful prep career at Arkansas High School. The current three-time 5A South All-State and All-Conference selection was also named to the 2024 5A South All-Tournament team and 2025 Academic All-State team and is teammates with 2026 signees Kaylyn Arnold and Kylee Lawrence on the DIVISION 18U National Team.

**Coach Prater's Thoughts:** "Aniya will be fun to watch blossom over the next four years. She reminds me of myself on the base paths and in the outfield. She plays the game with elite instinct and passion, and she will be an impact player both offensively and defensively."

**Kaylyn Arnold | Freshman | Catcher/1st Base | Douglas County High School | Douglasville, Ga.**

Arnold, a four-year letterwinner at Douglas County High School, joins Aniya Arnold and Kylee Lawrence as one of three 2026 signees from the DIVISION 18U National Team. During her prep career, Arnold was a two-time Douglas County Silver Slugger award winner, a three-time 1st team all-region selection and earned the Douglas County Superintendent's Scholar Award. Arnold also became the first female student-athlete at Douglas County High School to sign a Name, Image & Likeness deal.

**Coach Prater's Thoughts:** "Kaylyn is a gritty, high-energy player. She has a high softball IQ as a left-handed catcher and first baseman. Offensively, I expect that she will put up some high power numbers for us."

**Violet Espin | Freshman | Infielder | Riverside Polytechnic High School | Riverside, Calif.**

Espin joins the Tigers after helping Riverside Polytechnic High School to two league championships in 2023 and 2024. In her time as a Bear, Espin currently holds a .283 batting average with 37 RBI and 56 runs scored, while also having won her team's Defensive Player of the Year award during her junior season.

## Yixiang Wang named to the Haskins Award Final Fall watch list from sports page 1

helped Memphis to a team title at the Quail Valley Collegiate where he tied for career best three-round score (203). He also shot a career-low (63) in the opening round of the tournament in route to a share of second place in individual play.

Wang also collected a share of fourth place (138) at the Cullan Brown Invitational, tied for 14th

Espin is currently club teammates with fellow Memphis signee, Miranda Mease.

**Coach Prater's Thoughts:** "Violet is a defensive specialist. She takes pride in her defense and enjoys being a leader and is a competitor that always wants to win. Offensively, she is going to be a gap-to-gap hitter for us that scores a lot of runs."

**C.C. Hall | Freshman | 1st Base/Outfielder | Perry High School | Gilbert, Ariz.**

Hall comes to Memphis after a prep career at Perry High School in Gilbert, Arizona. Most recently in her junior season, Hall was named to the 6A All-Region and All-CUSD First Teams. Additionally, Hall helped Arizona Storm Mendez to a 2024 Top Gun Invitational Championship.

**Coach Prater's Thoughts:** "C.C. is an athletic lefty first baseman that plays with a lot of energy. She is a kid that will run through a wall for her teammates and will do whatever it takes to win. She is a lefty hitter that will spray to the gaps with singles, doubles and will sneak in a triple every now and then with her speed."

**Dekya Harris | Freshman | Infielder | Granby High School | Norfolk, Va.**

Harris comes to Memphis after a successful prep career at Granby High School, located in the Tidewater region of Virginia. She's earned five letters, two in track and three in softball, and has helped lead the Comets to three district championships in 2023-25, as well as a regional championship in 2024. Harris is a three-time first team all-district selection, two-time second team all-state selection and a three-time all-region selection, being named to the first team in 2023 and 2024.

Harris' sister, Destiny, is currently a sophomore outfielder on the LSU softball team.

**Coach Prater's Thoughts:** "Dekya is a highly athletic young lady. She is a strong middle infielder that can also play the outfield. She is going to bring a big bat to our lineup and speed on the bases."

**Lauren Jordan | Freshman | Outfielder | Union Grove High School | McDonough, Ga.**

Jordan joins Memphis after earning four letters in softball at Union Grove High School. The 2024 All-Georgia State Second Team selection helped the Wolverines to a 21-8 record, and she led the team with 23 stolen bases in the fall 2025 season. Jordan is also a three-time All-Region selection, earning second team honors in 2022 and 2023, along with first team recognition in

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## Saxophonist Dave McMurray: “I Love Life Even When I’m Hurting” is new album and philosophy



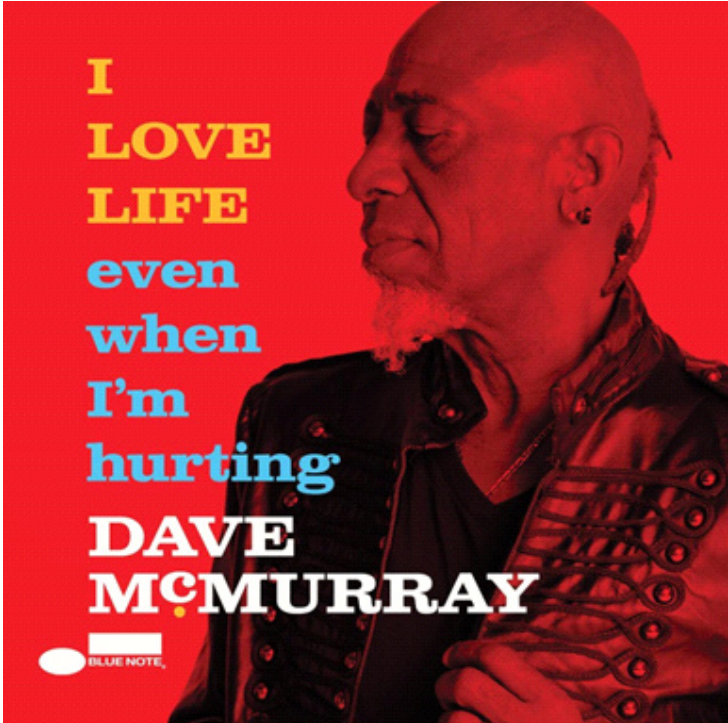
Saxophonist Dave McMurray’s album from Blue Note Records is now available to fans who want to take a deeper look at the man and his music. (Photos by Joe Vaughn)

*An Affirmation Of His Indomitable Spirit & A Celebration Of His Hometown*

November 14, 2025 - Today, Saxophonist Dave McMurray released his new Blue Note Records album I LOVE LIFE even when I’m hurting. The album is an affirmation of his indomitable spirit and a celebration of the love that he has for his hometown of Detroit, as well as for the many musicians with which he’s collaborated. Co-produced by McMurray and his longtime collaborator Don Was, the album was recorded at Rustbelt Studios in Royal Oak, Michigan, with a deeply talented cast of Detroit musicians including bassists Was and Ibrahim Jones,

*McMurray conceived of the album title I LOVE LIFE even when I’m hurting after having a deep discussion about the death of a friend who had been worn down by illness, eventually giving up and dying alone. McMurray’s response to that painful revelation was one of resilience: “Man, I love life even when I’m hurting.”*

keyboardists Luis Resto and Maurice O’Neal, guitarist Wayne Gerard, drummer Jeff Canady, percussionist Mahindi Masai, and vocalist Herschel Boone.



McMurray conceived of the album title I LOVE LIFE even when I’m hurting after having a deep discussion about the death of a friend who had been worn down by illness, eventually giving up and dying alone. McMurray’s response to that painful revelation was one of resilience: “Man, I love life even when I’m hurting.” Afterward McMurray wrote down that statement because it meant so much to him. “That ended up being the album title, because I kind of wrote songs around that,” he explained, “songs about positivity.”

McMurray wrote six of the nine compositions, all of which burst with soulful melodicism, emotional immediacy, and irresistible

grooves. The album also presents three choice covers including “The Plum Blossom” by Yusef Lateef, “The Wheel” by The Grateful Dead, and “We Got By,” a soulful interpretation of the Al Jarreau classic featuring vocals by Kem.

“Making this album was such a cool project,” McMurray concludes, “because everyone on it is someone I love.”

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## NFL family champions causes through ‘My Cause My Cleats’ from sports page 1

My Cause My Cleats will come to life through strategic partnerships, fundraising efforts, visual on-field elements, and meaningful storytelling. More information is below:

### Rayze Fundraising Partnership

To encourage fundraising for organizations chosen through My Cause My Cleats, the NFL is continuing its partnership with Rayze. The mobile-first platform, founded by seven-year NFL legend, Carl Nassib, aims to amplify nonprofit fundraising, corporate giving, and individual activism. By downloading the Rayze App, My Cause My Cleats participants receive their own custom ‘Champion’ donation links and QR codes to share across social media platforms, encouraging fans to support their causes. Stand Together Player-Led Partnership

The NFL is partnering with Stand Together to amplify the deep connection players have with the causes they champion by curating a multimedia campaign. Stand Together, a philanthropic community tackling the root causes of our country’s biggest problems, is building a library of player-led content to unlock the strength within communities and inspire fans to be part of that transformation. The collaboration also includes new fan-facing features on NFL.com/MyCauseMyCleats, enabling fans to search for players and learn their stories, bid on their cleats, and dive deeper into the causes that players sup-

port and donate directly to them. The storytelling will begin with the Origin Story of My Cause My Cleats, followed by a series of player-led community impact stories featuring Damar Hamlin (Buffalo Bills), Demario Davis (New Orleans Saints), Christian McCaffrey (San Francisco 49ers), Myles Garrett (Cleveland Browns), Lane Johnson (Philadelphia Eagles), and more.

### Custom Cleats with Adobe Firefly

NFL partner Adobe is encouraging fans to join the impact and showcase their creativity through an upcoming activation allowing fans to design custom cleats with Adobe Firefly’s generative AI. In addition, fans will be able to show their support for My Cause My Cleats by personalizing and sharing an official NFL-branded template in Adobe Express. Adobe will also be announcing partnerships with NFL players to showcase their chosen causes and cleat designers in an innovative way. Content from the creation process will release during My Cause My Cleats weeks, and will be included in Fields of Change, premiering December 27 on CBS. Learn more about Adobe Firefly, the all-in-one AI creative studio at the Adobe website.

### Visual On-Field Elements:

My Cause My Cleats will come to life visually on the field and in stadium during games throughout Weeks 12 and 13. Visual elements during activation games include goal post wraps, field-wall banners and in game moments recognizing the causes players have selected.

### Hear My Footsteps Advertising Campaign:

“Hear My Footsteps,” this year’s My Cause My Cleats campaign, is a bold expression of the power each player possesses to make their presence known on and off the field, by uplifting the communities and people around them. The campaign stars the following NFL players spotlighting the causes that mean the most to them: Dion Dawkins (Buffalo Bills) highlighting the Dion’s Dreamers Foundation, and the work he is doing to provide mentorship and support to those in underserved communities, Micah Parsons (Green Bay Packers) showcasing his contribution to the mission of the Lionheart Foundation, which empowers trauma-impacted populations through programming in social emotional learning, and Jake Ferguson (Dallas Cowboys) highlighting the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation, dedicated to honoring and celebrating the legacy of the Medal of Honor and its recipients. Created by 72andSunny, these spots are a powerful ode to all players creating positive impact on and off the field.

## Spetic named as Lou Groza Award semi-finalist



Gianni Spetic

MEMPHIS, Tenn. – University of Memphis place-kicker Gianni Spetic has been listed as a semi-finalist for the 2025 Lou Groza Collegiate Place-Kicker Award presented by the Orange Bowl, the Palm Beach County Sports Commission announced Tuesday. Spetic is one of 20 kickers named as semifinalists and is the only American Conference player named to the list.

*The Chardon, Ohio native has been near perfect this season going a perfect 46-for-46 for PATs while firing off 14-of-17 field goals for the Tigers. Spetic has nailed four field goals for over 50 yards – including two from 55 against Georgia State and South Florida.*

The Award is named for National Football League Hall of Fame kicker Lou “The Toe” Groza, who played 21 seasons with the Cleveland Browns. Groza won four NFL championships with Cleveland and was named NFL Player of the Year in 1954. Although an All-Pro offensive lineman as well, Groza ush-

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12 PM on November 23!  
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