



CCS sophomore is shooting for national Pitch, Hit, Run title **By Jan Schultz**

The Imperial Republican

It's a feat no one from Chase County has accomplished. It's only the fifth time for a Nebraska youth.

Josie Peterson, 14, has qualified for the national Major League Baseball Pitch, Hit & Run (PHR) finals and will compete July 14 against two others in her age group during the MLB All-Star Game activities.

For a young lady who's played ball since about five years of age, she sported a lot of smiles talking about it.

According to MLB, these 24 finalists advanced to nationals from about 625,000 youths originally in more than 4,000 local competitions.

After a fourth time at the Rockies Team Championship June 21 in Denver, where she won her division, Josie and her family learned Sunday she made the cut for nationals.

Her appearance in Denver came after she also took first at the local PHR contest May 4 and sectionals in York May 31.

The 24 national finalists were announced live Sunday on MLB Tonight on the MLB Network.

"I just sat there and looked at it," Josie said Monday.

That was amidst a lot of screaming and yelling, she said, from about a dozen family members who gathered at her aunt Tracy Beverly's office in Imperial for the broadcast.

She said she just stared at her name on the screen.

"I never did hear my name on TV because of all the screaming," she smiled.

The national PHR competition July 14 comes during the second day of the All-Star Game activities at Target Field, home of the Minnesota Twins in Minneapolis.

Josie will compete in the girls' age 13-14 division. The other two national qualifiers in her division are Amy Jensen of Parker, Texas and Alicia Zappia of Rancho Bernardo, Calif.

In the PHR contest, youths demonstrate their skills by competing in pitching, hitting and running competitions.

All 30 MLB clubs hosted team championships at their ballparks on weekends from May 31 through June 29. The top three competitors nationwide from each age group (7-8, 9-10, 11-12 and 13-14), as they compare their scores, advance to the national event presented by Scotts.

Girls and boys compete separately in the competition.

Josie said she felt good after her performance at the Rockies' Coors Field.

"I hit all six targets in the pitching section," she said, something she hadn't done before.

In that section, girls can choose to pitch a softball overhand or underhand, as they pitch from 35 feet out, attempting to hit the MLB strike zone. Josie pitches overhand.

In the hitting section, youths bat off a tee and get three swings, going for distance and accuracy along a tape laid out from home plate.

In the running part of the contest, girls start out between second and third base, and run for time to home plate.

Their marks are then totaled in a point system. Josie's total reached 1,097 points this year in Denver, the highest she's ever scored.

In between now and the competition, Josie said she's going to especially work on her hitting, hoping to improve that segment even more.

Perks come with qualifying

Besides getting to compete at the PHR nationals, other perks come with it, including two tickets to the July 15 All-Star Game.

With three siblings—Trevor, Morgan and Jaret—and parents Bruce and Crystal Peterson, she had to pick just one to attend the game with her.

Josie chose her dad.

All 24 of the finalists also get to be in the outfield to catch unsuccessful homers during the Homerun Derby as part of the FanFest events on July 14.

On Sunday, July 13, the 24 finalists and their families will be special guests at a welcome reception.

Unfortunately, "it's virtually impossible" to get tickets to the All-Star Game for the rest of the family, her dad said.

But they all plan to be in great seats for the Homerun Derby.