

Jenna Privette, seriously hurt 3 months ago, is playing softball and batting .636

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"We have our mother daughter ways," said Penny Rich-Privette. "I can always get her to laugh", she said of her daughter, Jenna Privette. The teen was injured January 6, 2012, in a hockey game against the St. Paul Blades. (Ginger Pinson: Pioneer Press)

Just over three months after a spinal cord injury in a hockey game left her legs temporarily paralyzed, Jenna Privette is not only playing softball but leading her St. Croix Lutheran team in hitting as the starting catcher.

"When she steps up to the plate, as the No. 4 hitter, I know she's going to hit the ball," coach Erin Hulse said on Thursday, April 19, adding Privette had a .636 batting average through three games.

More important, Hulse said, the 18-year-old senior has not had any major physical setbacks since joining the varsity team March 26 after being medically cleared by doctors.

"She has been able to do everything that we've asked of her. And she doesn't take it slow," said Hulse, a first-year head coach at the West St. Paul private school.

Privette was paralyzed from the waist down following a Jan. 6 on-ice incident in a game against the St. Paul Blades. At the time, her father said doctors described the injury as a spinal concussion.

Almost immediately, Privette and her family received local and international attention and support because of the injury, which occurred a week after Benilde-St. Margaret's hockey player Jack Jablonski was paralyzed after his spinal cord was severed in a junior varsity game.

Through physical therapy, Privette started regaining feeling in her legs. Using a walker and wheelchair, she returned to school Feb. 28.

Her teammates have been supportive, Hulse said.

"Our team really gets along well," she said,

adding that the players voted Privette the team captain.

Privette's mother, Penny, said Thursday that her daughter does not want to comment.

"She wants to move on and play softball," she said.

In St. Croix Lutheran's first game this season, a 10-5 victory over West Lutheran, Privette went 2 for 4 with two runs batted in. Through April 18, she had seven hits in 11 at-bats and six RBIs for the Crusaders (2-1, 1-1 Tri-Metro Conference).

The third-year starting catcher also had thrown out two runners trying to steal second base and made two putouts at home, Hulse said.

Jenna Privette told the Pioneer Press early last month, shortly after returning to school, that it was her goal to get back on the softball diamond.

She said she was motivated by those who have questioned the seriousness of her injury and claim she is looking for attention.

"They don't know me," she said. "They don't know what I do every day. They don't know the struggles I have every day."

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