

# TV? Could Happen

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By JOHN GALLE

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**HARRISONBURG** – For Peggie Sue Michael, perhaps the only thing more exciting than becoming an aunt at the age of 13 would be playing in the 2012 Little League Softball World Series in Portland, Ore.

“You get to be on TV,” she said. “In Little League, it’s something that people can remember forever, and I think that’s pretty cool.”

She also thinks her experienced Bridgewater All-Star team of 11- and 12-year-olds has what it takes to get there.

Scoring 108 runs and allowing just 12, Bridgewater rattled off seven straight wins to earn the District 3 title and will begin its quest for a World Series berth in the state tournament against District 14 champion East Orange on Friday at 10 a.m. in Heathsville.

Bridgewater, which pulled its all-stars from two teams of just under 30 girls, will also be sending its 13-girl 10-11 All-Star squad to states.

“You don’t get that every year,” Bridgewater 10-11 All-Star softball coach Tracey Richmond said of having the numbers and age-range to field multiple softball teams. “...A lot of them will be playing JV next year, for the most part [at Turner Ashby High School].”

Bridgewater 11-12 manager Grant Martin’s roster doesn’t have a single 11-year-old and all 10 girls were part of a state title run in the 9-10 age division.

“It’s a very experienced group,” Martin said. “This is their fourth straight trip to states. ...Offense has been a strength, as well as defense. And pitchers have been very consistent.”

Last year, though, Michael took a summer off to focus on her new travel ball team, Rowdies Elite – who incidentally faced the Lady Knights, Bridgewater’s travel team and Michael’s current teammates, twice, including a win in a Pennsylvania tournament over Memorial Day weekend.

But the team camaraderie at Bridgewater, Michael said, was special, drawing her back into the all-star setting for her only chance to compete for a Little League World Series berth.

Michael and her cousin, Hannah Cook, are two of five pitchers for the Bridgewater 11-12 All-Stars. Cook, Brittany Corbin and Ocean Burriss combined to pitch a no-hitter in the district championship against Woodstock-Edinburg.

Michael’s highlight came in Game 3 against Broadway when she earned a complete-game win with seven strikeouts and hit her first career home run – a two-run blast in the first inning.

Bridgewater is glad she's back on a loaded all-star squad.

"She gives you that quiet confidence, that ability to be cool, calm and collected on the mound or on third base against the quality opponent," Martin said.

As a team, Bridgewater boasts an impressive .426 batting average and .605 on-base percentage.

"We actually just started playing some [under-14 teams] because we've been searching around for competition because we're at that level of competition," said Doyle Hess, who coaches the Bridgewater 11-12 all-stars with Quentin Cook, Michael's uncle. "...Out of the 10, we've got probably nine power hitters. And out of the 10, we've got 10 girls that can play awesome small ball."

Shortstop Katrina Martin and pitcher/first baseman Hannah Cook lead the team in hitting at .636 and .632, respectively. Four others are hitting over .400, Martin said, giving Bridgewater plenty of reasons to be confident heading into the state tourney.

It's an extra exciting time for Michael – an aspiring nurse and the youngest of four kids. That's because Michael's 20-year-old sister, Janie, is due to have a baby boy on Saturday. "I love kids," Michael said.

She also loves fooling batters with her knuckleball, a tricky pitch that she learned from Coach Cook and her mother, former TA ace Shauna Michael (1990 graduate).

"It comes in real slow but has like a weird [trajectory], like it goes up and makes the batter pop the ball up sometimes, when I do it right," Michael said. "If I'm up in the count...and they keep hitting foul balls, I'll usually do a knuckle."

Vying for a Southeast Regional tournament berth in Warner Robbins, Ga., Bridgewater will have one eye on Mechanicsville – a team that beat Bridgewater 10-9 in the state championship game two years ago and will be making its fourth consecutive state appearance – and another on defending champion McLean, which was top-heavy in experience last year.

"We're top-heavy this year," Hess said.