

# Baseball trailblazer Kelsie Whitmore makes Oakland Ballers in Bay Area return

[Susan Slusser](#)



Right-hander Kelsie Whitmore warms up at a preseason tryout for the Oakland Ballers at Laney College in Oakland on Saturday.

Benjamin Fanjoy/Special to the Chronicle

**Kelsie Whitmore, who played for the Sonoma Stompers in 2016, is back playing for a Bay Area baseball team, making the Oakland Ballers after trying out on Saturday.**

The Ballers, who will open their inaugural season in the independent Pioneer League next month, on Wednesday signed Whitmore, a right-handed pitcher, as well as with two local players — infielder Andrew Martinez and right-hander Connor Caporale.

**“First and foremost, I’m just grateful for another year to play professional baseball and do what I love,” Whitmore said. “It’s a grind to find a team that’s willing to take a chance on you. I had some good conversations with the coaching staff and it made me excited to get after this season and to play for them, play for my teammates, play for Oakland.**

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"It's been a big hype around the city to bring the culture back and continue it with baseball and I'm excited to see how the fans are going to be like I'm excited for it all."

Whitmore, 25, became the first woman to appear in an Atlantic League lineup when she was with the Staten Island FerryHawks in 2022, and she and Stacy Piagno were the first women teammates in pro baseball since the 1950s when they played for the independent Pacific Association's Stompers in 2016 and 2017. Whitmore also played for the U.S. women's national baseball team from 2014-19.

Whitmore has played in the outfield along with pitching, but said she's going to concentrate solely on pitching now.

"I love being a two-way, that's why I did that, because I couldn't decide which one I wanted to be," she said. "I was very fortunate enough to be allowed to do both, but it's a handful and I decided this offseason that I was just going to commit to one and pitching is what I'm focusing on."

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Whitmore throws four-seam and two-seam fastballs, a curveball, changeup and slider.

"I am not an overpowering pitcher so I use every pitch in my arsenal to my benefit," she said. "I'm more of a crafty pitcher and I have to compete with everything I have. And even though that can be tough

at times, I feel like it makes it makes you stronger if you really stay committed to it.

"I have to make sure I'm effective with movement on every pitch I have, and that does play a role. But you also have to be smart and intelligent with how you're going to throw each pitch off of each other, mixing well and switching up timing. You really want to get the batter out of rhythm and off timing, and I feel like I'm able to bring that to the table with my style of play."

Ballers coach J.T. Snow told the Chronicle this week that Whitmore stood out at the tryouts, throwing in the mid-80s and striking out one player on three pitches. "I was impressed," Snow said.

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Martinez, 26, is from San Francisco and played at St. Francis High School and UC Santa Barbara. After being drafted by the Orioles in 2019, he spent three years in their system, reaching the High-A level. Caporale, 25, is from Vacaville and played at Wood High School and at Simpson University in Redding; he also played for the Westside Woolly Mammoths of the United Shore League in Michigan.

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