

Prospectus Roundtable: [WISE]

Ginny Searle, Alexis Collins, and Kate Preusser

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IMAGE CREDIT: PHOTO COURTESY OF WISE (WOMEN IN SPORTS EVENTS)

Last week more than a dozen women participated in the Women In Sports Events (WISE) inaugural “Scouting Baseball” program, and BP writers Alexis Collins and Kate Preusser were among the attendees of the four-day program. The program is designed to help women with aspirations of working in front offices get a foot in the door. For more information on the program’s origins and goals, we highly recommend you check out [this piece Alexis wrote](#) a couple weeks ago. Both women sat down with BP’s Associate Editor Ginny Searle to discuss their takeaways from the program.

Ginny Searle: Why did you sign up for the program and what were your expectations going in?

Alexis Collins: I originally signed up for the program on the advice of a mentor that it would be beneficial for me to connect with Frank Marcos who is the former director of the MLB Scouting Bureau. Unfortunately, Frank had to cancel at the last moment due to a scheduling conflict but Jennifer Blatt reassured me the program would not change. I wasn’t quite sure what to expect as I am self-taught in everything I have learned about scouting. I was most excited to have the opportunity to gain “formal” scouting training, to have things explained in greater detail instead of between pitches. Beyond the scouting, I was looking forward to meeting women who shared a similar passion for baseball and hoped that I would be able to form some new connections.

Kate Preusser: Unlike Alexis, I stumbled into this almost by accident. A friend of mine happened to see a tweet from a friend of Jennifer’s urging people to sign up. I spent weeks debating whether or not it would be a wise investment of my time and money, and tried to reach out to someone I knew in the scouting world to ask if he had ever heard of it (he had not). Eventually I just decided to take the plunge and I’m so glad I did. Like Alexis, everything I know about scouting is self-taught or drawn from people I know with scouting or playing experience,

so I was looking forward to learning some more “official” scouting information. I’ll admit my concerns about whether or not this would be the appropriate level for me hadn’t abated when we were e-mailed a packet of course information and one of the attachments was a super-basic glossary of MLB terms. I started wondering if I had just wasted a bunch of money. Luckily, nothing could have been further from the truth.

GS: What surprised you about the program?

KP: As someone who primarily writes about baseball at the major and minor-league levels, the program made me realize how many other ways there are of being involved in the game. I went in expecting most people would, like me, be an aspiring scout, but other participants included women with extensive coaching or playing experience, or those who had jobs in front offices I didn’t even realize were jobs, like “vice president of governmental affairs,” which is as important as it sounds.

AC: Similar to Kate, I expected the participants to be aspiring scouts and what I realized is that there is a wide ranging interest among women in learning the details of baseball scouting and player evaluation. I think it’s important to recognize that while teams host women’s fantasy camps, scout school programming is different and can be applied across many areas of baseball, from fans who are interested in learning more to women who aspire to work in some capacity in baseball and current team employees looking to add value to their organization.

KP: One thing that stuck out to me was a general sense among the participants, including those whose interest in scouting was more for background information, was that we all wanted to know *more*: more scouting vocabulary, more techniques for evaluating players, more ways to assess who is and isn’t a prospect. To me that speaks to the general shroud of secrecy hanging over scouting. *Dollar Sign on the Muscle* is the only text I can think of off the top of my head about scouting, and that came out, what, thirty years ago? So if you want to learn, you have to find an incredibly patient mentor, or you have to scabble to put all this stuff together for yourself. To me it seems like that not only creates unnecessary hurdles which keep people out of

the profession, but is disproportionately hard on women, who have less likelihood of having played at an advanced level or to have the kinds of connections that lead to that mentorship.

GS: Did any specific experiences stand out for you?

KP: One thing I wish we'd had time to do was to get out and see the prep tournament that was happening on the back fields at the complex. [Josh Miller](#), a coach at Arizona Christian College, came to talk to us about intangibles and he emphasized the importance of scouting a player before they ever take the field: if the player is prepared with all his gear, and who is carrying that gear; how he greets his teammates, if he's warmly received by them or not; what his body language is like as he's walking to the field; if he's an energy-taker or an energy-giver; the list goes on. I had thought I was pretty attuned to that stuff but putting it all down in a list definitely reminded me to scout the dugout, as well. Even at the AFL games I started noticing which starting pitchers engaged with their catchers mid-inning, who threw their helmet at the wall after a strikeout, who seemed to be in charge of keeping the energy levels up in the dugout.

AC: Two moments will stick with me from this experience. First, when our group arrived for batting practice the first day, players, coaches and scouts immediately noticed our presence. First came the looks of uncertainty and then the questions, "Who are you and what are you doing?" Once word spread that we were participating in a scouting program, only then were they interested to learn more about us and the program. Second, having the opportunity to meet Amanda Hopkins and hear from her about her experience as a scout for the Mariners, inspired me to keep working hard towards my goals. She has worked hard to get where she is and she has overcome adversity to get there and just having the chance to learn from her was worth the price of the program alone.

KP: Oh yeah, building off what Alexis said there, many of the scouts were very accommodating and helpful once we explained who we were and who we were with. And then there was the group of guys who moved seats to a different section and were clearly snickering at us in our purple polo shirts...unfortunately, that's an experience that stands out, as well.

GS: Did you find the experience valuable on the whole, and did any information or exposure stand out as particularly valuable?

AC: Absolutely. The entire experience was valuable and to be able to participate in an event like this and join people from a variety of backgrounds with unique perspectives and diverse experience all in one room was amazing. All of the information presented was valuable while some was more directly related to scouting. Overall there was no time for unnecessary topics as we ran right up to the end of the last day. For me, being able to apply what I learned in the classroom and translate it into a scouting report was exactly what I wanted to learn. I came away from the event very determined and motivated to continue working hard towards my goals and believing that I will one day achieve what I have set out to accomplish.

KP: It was definitely a valuable experience, and not just the nitty-gritty scouting information I learned, like how to operate a stopwatch (turns out I've been doing it wrong all this time!). One thing we heard over and over again was that in scouting you have to be fearless; you can't hem and haw on a player, you have to commit to whether or not you think that player can be MLB-caliber in two or five or ten years. As a woman, I'm so accustomed to qualifying my opinion or building in places to disagree or ending my sentences with a question mark that to be reminded to be fearless in your conviction was really valuable. And it goes beyond player evaluation—you have to be fearless in pursuing mentorship, starting conversations, and selling yourself to teams in these jobs that haven't traditionally had women occupying those spaces. I spend a lot of time worrying about being right but in scouting, we learned you're probably going to be wrong somewhere between 99-99.5% of the time, so the idea of letting go of that fear of being wrong and just living in your convictions is something that I found really inspiring, even beyond baseball.