

## **Cheshire softball pitcher Jenica Matos dominating the game despite being legally blind**

Jenica Matos, the ace pitcher for the Cheshire High School is one of the most dominant pitchers in Connecticut. The legally blind senior, who has Stargardt disease, commands a 64-mph fastball and has led her team to both a state title and undefeated stretches, all while committed to St. John's University.

Matos was diagnosed with Stargardt disease at age 11. It is a rare genetic eye disorder that severely impacts her central vision, making it nearly impossible for her to see home plate clearly or read signs across a room. Despite this, she has become an absolute force in Connecticut high school softball:

- **Unreal Stats:** During her team's run to the CIAC Class LL title, Matos posted an incredible 25-3 record with a 0.38 ERA and 300 strikeouts in 165.2 innings.
- **Velocity:** Her fastball reaches speeds up to 64 mph, which proportionally translates to a baseball pitcher hitting the low 90s.

Because Matos cannot see the minute details of the field, her success relies on supreme muscle memory, contrast, and tight communication with her coaching staff and catchers.

- **Visual Contrast:** Cheshire catchers use black mitts and white or brightly taped chest protectors to give Matos clear, high-contrast targets to aim for in the strike zone.
- **Muscle Memory:** Having pitched since she was young, Matos relies heavily on her release point and knowing exactly where the ball is heading the second it leaves her hand.

- Team Effort: Her coach, notes that while her vision is a challenge, it has ultimately fueled Matos to work even harder to be judged purely on her incredible skill.

Matos's inspiring performance and resilience have drawn national attention. She committed to play Division I softball for St. John's University, where she plans to continue her stellar career while acting as an inspiration and advocate for others dealing with similar visual impairments.