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First Heritage Christian athlete signs with Division I team

BY **HAP FRY** • HAPFRY@COLORADOAN.COM • FEBRUARY 4, 2010

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Jessie Stewart took full advantage of the unique resources her school, Heritage Christian Academy, offers Wednesday morning.



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Jessie Stewart, sitting, laughs with her mother, Marcie, while her father, Andy, signs his portion of her letter of intent Wednesday at a signing day celebration at Heritage Christian Academy. She is receiving a scholarship to play soccer at Iowa State University. (V. Richard Haro/The Coloradoan)

Stewart hunkered down in the school's prayer room and read a passage out of the Book of Job before stepping out into the school's gym and signing the most significant document a Heritage Christian athlete ever has signed.

"I was definitely very nervous," Stewart said. "I went up there and read a passage of scripture, and it just talked about how God's plan can't be ruined or destroyed at all. And that it will come out in completion."

Completion came at exactly 1 p.m. when Stewart signed her letter of intent to play soccer at Iowa State and became the first Heritage Christian athlete ever to receive a Division I scholarship.

"This is certainly up there for us as a school and as an athletic program," Heritage Christian athletic director Kevin McGinley said. "To see a student from a Class 2A school make it to a D-I program is very significant for us."

As proof of that, Stewart's signing party was held during the school's lunch hour for students in grades nine through 12.

Almost every one of the 93 students were on hand, as were several members of Stewart's Immanuel Community Church and a handful of her Arsenal Gold club teammates from Poudre and Rocky Mountain.

"I was so nervous," Stewart said. "The fact that I didn't have to talk was really good. I think, more than anything, it was just really exciting to see the



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Jessie Stewart, 17, left, goofos off with friend Sarah Brase, 18, right, before the celebration. (V. Richard Haro/The Coloradoan)

DID YOU KNOW?

Stewart's grandfather, Andrew Sr., played semi-professional soccer with the Pawtucket Rangers in the 1930s and '40s.

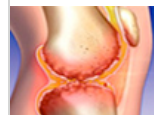
JESSIE STEWART BY THE NUMBERS

- > **247** - number of Heritage Christian students K-12
- > **93** - number of Heritage Christian students 9-12
- > **35** - colleges that recruited her to play soccer

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school here with me."

While Stewart stuck to signing, there were plenty of other people willing to speak on her behalf.

Her father, Andy Stewart, club soccer coach, Tony Minetto, Heritage Christian coach, Anna Suarez, Eagle

Her father, Andy Stewart, club soccer coach, Tony Minatta, Heritage Christian coach, Alma Suarez, Eagles teammate Sarah Brase and McGinley all took turns at the podium, bringing about both tears and laughter.

"I want to thank all the people that have been in Jessie's circle over the years," Andy Stewart said to the crowd.

Outside her parents and her brother, probably no one's been in Stewart's circle longer than Joey Harty. The two senior classmates, almost unbelievably, have attended Heritage Christian since preschool.

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