

# The Times SPORTS

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## A lifelong passion for football

BY MALLORY ALLEN  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

GREEN BAY – For more than two decades, Matt Behrendt's life has revolved around one thing: football.

From joining his first tackle team in third grade to three National Championship victories at UW-Whitewater, to playing and

coaching at the professional level, Behrendt calls this sport "a huge love of my life."

Over the years, his football career has made many stops all across the country, but Behrendt's winding road has led him back to Green Bay — the city he now proudly calls home — as a coach for the team whose uniform he once wore.

### Three championships

Born and raised in the small Chicago suburb of Westchester, Behrendt became a football junkie when he was just eight years old, playing for his local Pop Warner team.

"On the first day of practice, our coach asked who wanted to be the team's quarterback and I raised my hand," Behrendt re-

called. "The coach said, 'Cool, you can do it!' and from there, it all worked out."

After graduating from Nazareth Academy in 2011, Behrendt moved two hours north to play collegiate football at UW-Whitewater, where he became good friends with future Packers wide receiver Jake Kumerow.

"I know it sounds cliché, but

those were the greatest four years of my life," Behrendt said. "I had a few opportunities to go Division I-AA or Division II, but I tell people all the time that choosing UW-Whitewater was one of the best decisions I've ever made."

As a freshman, Behrendt was part of a squad that won the

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The Green Bay Celtics' played a muddy pre-season match against the Fox Cities Gargoyles at Scray Hill Park May 6. The Gargoyles came out triumphant with a final score of 32-29. Pictured here, Green Bay Celtics' Jared Skinkis grapples with the Fox Cities Gargoyles' Joe Vander Wyst over the ball with Andrew Urbanus on his heels. Behind them, from left, are Steve Vidas, Eric Radue, Ed Borowitz, Brody Upton and Noah Thiem.

Janelle Fisher photo



Maddy Ehlke, a 2020 Bay Port graduate, was recruited out of high school to play at Minnesota, a Big Ten school located in Minneapolis/St. Paul.

University of Minnesota Athletics photo

## Former Bay Port softball standout finally getting her chance to shine

BY RICH PALZEWIC  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

GREEN BAY – After playing behind upperclassmen during her first two seasons at the University of Minnesota, former Bay Port softball star Maddy Ehlke is finally getting her chance.

And the former Pirates first baseman is making the most of her collegiate opportunity.

Ehlke, a 2020 Bay Port graduate, was recruited out of high school to play at Minnesota, a Big

Ten school located in Minneapolis/St. Paul.

"You have to be patient and bide your time," Ehlke said. "I knew as an underclassman I'd have to earn my time. I figured I'd need a year or two, because it was a big jump from high school to the Big Ten."

Ehlke said while the COVID-19 pandemic afforded college athletes an extra year of eligibility, it also created problems later that year for incoming freshmen.

"This is true of my first two seasons at Minnesota — COVID

affected many of the underclassmen because those players that lost (their spring 2020 season) were granted another year of eligibility," she said. "That affected my playing time, but COVID also afforded me the time to grow into more playing time. I think it was needed and got me to where I am today."

Ehlke, a true junior, said a big senior class at Minnesota graduated after the 2022 season, so she thought this year could be different

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