

curve ball



xc

FLASHBACK: Mel Roche pitching in Beijing.



DH196912

GLORY DAYS: Mel Roche celebrates a home run in Beijing before the sport was dropped.

league in Europe. They are passionate about softball but they are small," she says.

"That would be something I would look into when I finish playing in Japan, and also developing the game in Africa.

"That might take 10 years or 20 years, but I think it's feasible to make it a true Olympic sport and then maybe the Olympic Committee will look at us differently."

After all, the Olympic Games are to softball what the World Cup is to soccer. It doesn't get any bigger.

The plight of the softball player is similar to many minor sports in Australia and the decision to exclude the sport from the Games also meant a huge drop in funding with many players forced to support their own travel when playing.

As one of the lucky ones (Roche has been playing in Japan for the past 10 years), Roche acknowledges she is privileged to be paid to play the sport she loves and the conviction in her voice tells you there is no risk of it being taken for granted.

"I don't want to spotlight other sports and how they behave off the field, but they kind of don't respect the privilege of playing professionally. I've never taken my position

FACTFILE

ATHLETES TURNED MUSICIANS:

■ Pro surfers Jack Johnson and Donavan Frankenreiter hit the airwaves in the early 2000s with their laid-back tunes.

■ Cricketing brothers Brett and Shane Lee were members of Six-and-Out with teammates Brad McNamara, Richard Chee Quee and Gavin Robertson before Brett landed a Bollywood hit with Asha.

■ Broncos Allan "Alfie" Langer and Kevin and Kerrod Walters had a short stint in the record industry when they formed the Ipswich Connection in 1992.

■ Singer Pete Murray was a talented rugby player as a youngster before a knee injury prematurely ended his career and he found solace in the guitar.

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