

[< Back](#) | [Home](#)

Summer ball provides relaxing, productive atmosphere for Huskers

By: By ZACH LEMING

Posted: 9/29/05

Just three days after suffering a heartbreaking 8-7 loss to Arizona State at the College World Series, four Cornhuskers laced up their cleats at Christenson Field for the Beatrice Bruins.

Sophomores Joba Chamberlain, Andy Gerch, Tony Watson and Ryan Wehrle were all part of the Bruins' summer baseball team that advanced to the National Baseball Congress National Tournament in Wichita, Kan.

Five incoming Huskers — Jared Cranston, Steve Edlefsen, Luke Gorsett, Nick Jaros and Jesse Shriner — accompanied the four returning NU players. All five are junior-college transfers.

Gorsett led the nation in homers at the junior-college level with 23, while Shriner was an All-American at Lamar (Colo.) Community College.

Wehrle, who played for the Bruins last summer, enjoyed his experience with the team.

"Every year we send four or five guys to Beatrice along with some recruits," Wehrle said. "It gives us a chance to meet the new guys."

Also, two Huskers from the 2004 graduating class — Andy Lomax and Chad Steele — were members of the 24-man Bruin roster.

The Bruins, coached by team founder and Seattle Mariners regional scout Bob Steinkamp, ended their season with a 24-16-1 record and placed ninth out of 42 teams at the NBC National Tournament, losing to eventual champion Prairie Gravel, Ill.

It was just the seventh time the Bruins have finished in the NBC top-10.

NU Coach Mike Anderson has nothing but praise for Steinkamp and his summer program.

"Bob Steinkamp has been incredible for us because, number one, he's a Nebraska guy . . . and he's a guy who wants to develop kids," Anderson said. "He provides a good teaching environment."

Steinkamp is assisted by Vince DiMaggio, cousin of Hall of Famer Joe DiMaggio.

Chamberlain said he likes that DiMaggio is laid back and easy to talk to.

"I've never heard a guy at that age talk so much about MVP Baseball," Chamberlain said, referring to a video game. "It's such a joy to go to the field and be able to talk about other things than just baseball, like life and other things that are going on."

The M.I.N.K. (Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas) League, in which the Bruins compete, is a wood-bat league that is comparable to the better-known Cape Cod League where players live with host families and get summer jobs, such as mowing lawns.

But don't think the M.I.N.K League stands up to the Big 12 Conference.

"(Playing for the Bruins) gets you ready, but Big 12 pitching is above what it is here," Wehrle said. "But it's summer ball so it's a little more relaxed."

The league may have a more relaxed atmosphere, but it's still a place where a player can work on getting better.

"I worked a lot on refining my pitches and just keeping my arm in shape," Chamberlain said. "I worked on my changeup and the location of my fastball."

Chamberlain dominated M.I.N.K League batters, going 5-0 with a 1.59 ERA and 63 strikeouts to go along with only 13 walks.

The Lincoln Northeast grad had four complete games in the six games he started. In a regional tournament win against the St. Joe Saints, Chamberlain tossed a complete game, three-hit gem, striking out 16.

That performance came less than a month after Chamberlain dazzled Saints hitters with a complete game in which he scattered eight hits and struck out 10 in a 5-1 victory.

Wehrle led the nine Husker players in batting average, hitting at a .364 clip. He only played in 16 games, though, because of summer school obligations.

Jaros, a transfer from Maple Woods (Mo.) Community College, flashed signs of brilliance, batting .331 while leading the Bruins in both home runs (5) and RBIs (25). Steinkamp expects Jarros to start in center field for NU this season.

These nine Huskers mark only a few who have gone to play for the Bruins. Alex Gordon, Joe Simokaitis, Jeff Leise, Adam Stern and Jed Morris all spent summers in Beatrice.

"I think to come to Nebraska and not play for Bob Steinkamp is a sin," Chamberlain said. "Everybody's got to experience Bob Steinkamp and Beatrice and going to the Pizza Hut after the game. It's just things like that that I'll remember for the rest of my life."

© Copyright 2007 Daily Nebraskan