

## Beatrice Daily Sun

### Fans bid farewell to Beatrice Bruins

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By Patrick Ethridge/Daily Sun editor

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After calling Beatrice home for the past 40 years, the Beatrice Bruins baseball team played its final home game Tuesday night at Christenson Field.

The Bruins, a summer collegiate baseball team that has served as a launching pad for hundreds of professional ball players, will disband at the end of its current season as manager Bob Steinkamp enters retirement.

Over the past 40 years, Steinkamp has coached more than 250 players who have gone on to play professional baseball, including 18 who have made it to the Major Leagues.

On Tuesday night, the Bruins said farewell to their fans and Christenson Field, where the team has called home since 1974.

"It's kind of sad to see it end," said Bruins' first baseman Tyson Parks.

Parks, who graduated from Beatrice High School in 2005 and currently plays for the University of Arkansas-Little Rock, grew up watching the Bruins.

"I grew up here so it always seemed like home for me. It's one of the best opportunities you can have," Parks said. "A lot of great players have come and gone on to pro baseball, that's what it's all about. You want a chance to play at the next level, coming to play for the Bruins gets you on that path."

Parks' older brother also played for the Bruins for four years and then became an assistant coach for the team.

"I've been going to Bruins games since I was 16," Parks said. "I got to see (current New York Yankee) Joba Chamberlain play and guys like (Chicago White Sox prospect) Jordan Danks and (Kansas City Royals') Alex Gordon. It was always like a grooming process, you go to school and your college coaches are more in depth. Bob takes you and fine-tunes your skills."

Through four decades, Steinkamp brought some of the nation's top collegiate baseball players to Beatrice to play for the Bruins through the summer. Steinkamp would go so far as to find housing for players who needed a place to stay, be it with his own mother or other host families in the community.

Lois Kammerlohr has hosted Bruins players for the past 12 years.

"I guess I kind of knew it was coming," she said of Steinkamp's retirement. "I just didn't think it was coming this soon. I've thoroughly enjoyed having the guys. I love the game, having our own semi-pro team has just been great. I think Beatrice needs a semipro team. There has been a loyal group of us and boy are we

going to miss them.”

After their time in Beatrice, Kammerlohr continues to follow the Bruins players in their baseball endeavors.

“I’ve had players who are going to make it,” she says proudly. “I had Jordan Danks for two summers, he was drafted by Chicago White Sox and has already made it up to double A. Whether they make it to the Majors or not, they’ve been really interesting people. These fellas all have a love for the game. The money isn’t the thing, it’s the love of the game. I think Bob has instilled some good coaching techniques with the boys over the years. I just can’t say enough good things about Bob and the team.”

Bob and Lisa Wiegand have hosted Bruins’ players for the past 16 years. They had two Bruins lined up to stay at their home this summer, but both moved on shortly after being drafted by Major League Baseball teams.

For the Wiegands, the players become like family.

“We have had players since our son was 4-years-old,” Lisa Wiegand said. “In fact, that’s how I got him to sleep upstairs. The first year, a player threw a baseball back and forth from room to room with him.”

That player, Chad Wiles, was later drafted and played for the Seattle Mariners.

“Just this morning for instance, at the fairgrounds, we had nine players come out and help us lift showcases and move them,” Wiegand said. “We usually have about three players mow for us at the fairgrounds and a couple kids who work for us at the farm and help irrigate.”

Though Wiegand will miss the Bruins, she understands Steinkamp’s decision.

“I certainly can understand Bob’s situation. He’s given us a wonderful opportunity for the community to see prime baseball. It’s a lot of work, the fundraising, getting the team together, getting the field ready, I can understand why. I’ll miss it, I’ll go into baseball withdrawal, that’s for sure.”

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