

## Christensen aiming for Fort Myers

Written by S.D. Buhr

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FORT MYERS, Fla. - Almost a year ago, Cedar Rapids Washington grad Chad Christensen got the word he would be making his full-season pro baseball debut with his hometown club, the Cedar Rapidsernels.

This spring, the Minnesota Twins farm hand is hoping to avoid a return trip to Cedar Rapids.

You can't blame a guy for preferring a promotion up the Twins' minor league ladder over another summer living at home. After hitting .272 for the Kernels last season, Christensen left Cedar Rapids and returned to his previous stomping grounds at the University of Nebraska.

"I went back to Lincoln and lived there," Christensen said Tuesday. "A lot of guys that are in pro ball are back there so we kind of work out together and use the facilities and everything. That's where I was doing my workouts.

"I came home for a couple of weeks before I came here (to Fort Myers). I got down here a little early, February 23rd, to get outside, get out of the cold and get back to baseball."

With about two weeks of spring training left, his ultimate assignment is primarily just speculation at this point, but every player in camp is hoping for a promotion and for Christensen that would mean a spot with the Twins' Class High-A affiliate in Fort Myers.

"I'm not positive," said Christensen, who turned 24 in October. "I would think probably down here. But I'm just playing, it's not up to me. I'm just trying to play every day and stay healthy and get back in the swing of things."

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For Christensen, playing every day last summer meant spending time at various positions on the field. He played all over the outfield and logged 90 games at first base. He also played 27 games at third base in the minor leagues in 2013.

Versatility is a benefit for players trying to get noticed in a professional baseball organization and Christensen will continue to demonstrate his willingness and ability to move around the field. During spring training, however, it's clear the Twins are wanting to see him in the outfield as much as possible.

"I've been playing all outfield – all three outfield spots," he said. "Obviously, if I'm needed to go in to the infield again, I can go in the infield, but I've been in the outfield down here, so far."

Christensen enjoyed a solid year with the Kernels last season with nine home runs, 73 RBIs and 30 stolen bases in 127 games. He had 24 doubles, seven triples, 134 hits and 84 runs scored.

An assignment with the Fort Myers Miracle would keep Christensen with a lot of last summer's Kernels. Of the 30 or so players currently listed on the Miracle's spring training roster, more than 25 spent time in Cedar Rapids last season. Christensen likes the idea of sticking with that group.

"Yeah, we have a good group. Guys come ready to go every day, that's what makes it fun," he said. "We're looking forward to getting the season going."

Christensen isn't the only one ready to get the season rolling. Kernels hitting coach Tommy Watkins indicated he is more than ready to head to Cedar Rapids.

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“This is like Groundhog Day,” Watkins said, alluding to the day-after-day repetitive nature of spring training.

Christensen indicated the players are starting to feel the same way. “Yeah, we’re starting to get kind of anxious this time of year,” he remarked.