

## Schebler coming home after successful season

Written by Jim Ecker

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Scott Schebler is coming home Sunday for a well-deserved vacation after a successful season in the minor leagues.

He hit .285 with 13 homers and 58 RBIs for the Los Angeles Dodgers in the Rookie Pioneer League, collecting those numbers in just 70 games with the Ogden (Utah) Raptors.

He's spent the last month at the Fall Instructional League in Arizona, but it's almost over and the former Cedar Rapids Prairie star is looking forward to some home cooking in Solon.

It's been a long year, starting with spring training in March, but it's been a good year.

"Overall I felt good about the season, getting my first one under my belt," he said. "I didn't know what to expect. Now I kind of do.

"I wouldn't say I excelled, but I thought I did my job well. There were some struggles, but that's baseball."

Schebler, 21, was selected by the Dodgers in the 26th round of the 2010 draft after his freshman year at Des Moines Area Community College. He signed at the deadline on Aug. 16, 2010 and began his pro career this season.

Schebler began the year in left field at Ogden, but played 50 games in right field and appears to have settled at that position. He runs well and has a strong arm, so right field could be his spot as he tries to climb in the minor leagues.

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Schebler was happy with most of his numbers this season, but struck out 97 times and worked on making better contact with two strikes in the Instructional League.

"I struck out quite a bit during the season. There's no getting around that," said Schebler, a right-hander who bats from the left side of the plate. "They're trying to eliminate the leg kick I've got. Get ready for the fastball and adjust off of that."

Schebler also worked on becoming a better base stealer in the Instructional League after struggling with that aspect of the game in the Pioneer League.

"This season I had only one stolen base, and with my speed I should have a lot more than that," he said. "I've never stolen bases before. It's a lot harder than I thought. There are a lot of little things to look at, a lot of little things to watch on a pitcher to get that one step that you need."

"I had the green light all year," he said. "They continually pushed me and pushed me to go. I don't know, I would freeze up at first base. I never had the mindset of stealing, and I didn't know how to steal."

He's stolen three bases in the Instructional League and feels he's making progress. He's also been working on his defense, trying to become a better outfielder.

Schebler played five sports at Cedar Rapids Prairie, but it's been all baseball at DMACC and now the minor leagues. That's helped him improve as a player.

"I get to concentrate 24/7 on one thing. Once you do that, you really improve a lot," he said. "Especially with baseball, because there's two sides to the game."

"There's the mental side to the game, which is 80 percent of the game. And there's the physical side. The mental part is still what I'm working on."

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Schebler reported to the Instructional League as soon as the Pioneer League campaign ended. He was glad to go, viewing it as a favorable sign with the Dodgers.

"I used to hear that it's a bad thing, but the more I hear about it, it's a good thing," he said. "I think it's like the top-50 prospects get invited. It's a good thing that I'm here."

He's been playing baseball non-stop since March, but said he's had a chance to relax a little in Arizona.

"It's not a real intense camp," he said. "My body is doing a lot better than it was during the season, just because we're not playing as long. I'm ready for a break, I'll tell you that."

Schebler thinks he'll be home in Solon until it's time to report for spring training.

"They could call me at any time and send me to a winter league, but I don't think that's going to happen this year," he said. "I'll be in town for a while."

Schebler said the Dodgers control his rights for five years. He fully expects to be invited to spring training in 2012 after having a productive rookie campaign.

The Dodgers have a Class A team in the Midwest League in Midland, Mich., so that could be Schebler's next stop in the organization. He hasn't heard anything yet, but he might be playing for the Great Lakes Loons next season.

"They really keep that under wraps," he said. "You just never know."

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The Loons play in the same league as the Cedar Rapids Kernels. They are not scheduled to play in Cedar Rapids during the 2012 season, but will have trips to Burlington, Peoria (Ill.) and Beloit (Wis.).

Schebler has mixed feelings about the possibility of playing in the Midwest League.

"It would be nice, but there's always added pressure when you're around your family," he said. "I would love it, of course, but the added pressure can build on you and wear on you a little more than people think. But obviously it would be nice to play in front of your family and all that."

Schebler finished one year of junior college at DMACC and plans to take online courses while he's home, in addition to working out. He also plans to work for his father, Jeff Schebler, who is an instructional engineer.

Schebler has survived one year of professional baseball. He's looking forward to more.

"It's kind of nice to get the first year out of the way and also do well," he said.