

3 Cougars plan reunion at Mount Mercy

Written by Jim Ecker
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Jimmy Lizarraga, Alex Hayden and Cody Bell went their separate ways after they graduated from Kennedy High School in 2012.

Lizarraga joined the baseball team at Mount Mercy University, Hayden joined the ballclub at Iowa Central Community College and Bell decided to play golf at the University of Northern Iowa, but now the three all-state ballplayers will be holding a reunion right here in Cedar Rapids.

Hayden and Bell have decided to join Lizarraga at Mount Mercy and will play for new coach Jack Dahm, the former head coach at the University of Iowa.

"I'm pretty excited for it," said Hayden. "It's close to home, it's close to all my friends and Cody is coming back. It will be nice playing with Cody and Jimmy again."

Hayden and Bell committed to Mount Mercy when Desi Druschel was still the head coach this year. They are sticking to their commitments and are looking forward to playing for Dahm.

"I'm excited," said Bell. "It seems like he's a really good coach. He knows what he's talking about. He has a great track record."

All three players enjoyed outstanding careers at Kennedy and were named all-state as seniors in 2012 when the Cougars went 33-6 and reached the semifinals of the Class 4A state tournament.

Hayden, a pitcher and middle infielder, was named to the All-State Super Team. Bell, a first baseman, third baseman and pitcher, was named first team all-state. Lizarraga, primarily a catcher, was named second team all-state.

Hayden fashioned a 9-1 record and 3.73 ERA at Iowa Central this season, with five complete

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games and two shutouts. He struck out 60 batters in 72.1 innings with only 10 walks as the Tritons finished with a 38-19 mark.

Hayden was strictly a pitcher at Iowa Central, but he'd like a chance to play in the field at Mount Mercy. "That's definitely something I want to talk to him (Dahm) about when I sit down and meet with him," said Hayden.

Bell was an all-state golfer at Kennedy, but he was not able to crack the lineup at Northern Iowa during his two years in Cedar Falls. He decided it was time to return home and play baseball again.

"I really missed the sport," he said. "I was talking to Jimmy Lizarraga, and he told me that they were looking for some players."

Hayden, Bell and Lizarraga are all playing for Fairfax in the Iowa Valley League this summer and are looking forward to being teammates in college for the Mustangs. "Hopefully we can have the same success we had at Kennedy," said Bell.

Bell and Hayden made contributions to the varsity as sophomores in 2010 when Kennedy won the Class 4A state title.