

Marlins take Christensen in 35th round

Written by Jim Ecker

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Chad Christensen plans to drive to Minnesota this Friday and begin playing for the Mankato MoonDogs in the Northwoods League.

Beyond that, he's not sure if he'll sign a pro contract with the Miami Marlins in the next six weeks or return to Nebraska for his senior year with the Cornhuskers.

Christensen was picked by the Marlins in the 35th round of the Major League draft on Wednesday, lower than he anticipated and hoped. He was the 1,067th player selected in the 40-round draft.

"I wasn't quite expecting that, but I'm thankful for the opportunity to be drafted and I'm excited to be picked by the Marlins," said Christensen, who starred at Cedar Rapids Washington before enrolling at Nebraska three years ago.

"It's what I've worked for, to get that chance. We'll have to see what happens, what they'll offer and what they want to do, but it's very exciting."

Major League Baseball has imposed strict new rules regarding signing bonuses this year. Each team was assigned a specific bonus pool amount, and if they exceed that amount they'll face penalties. The signing bonus for players selected after the 10th round cannot exceed \$100,000 without counting against the team's bonus pool.

In short, Christensen is unlikely to be offered a healthy bonus. He has to weigh the opportunity to play pro baseball against the opportunity to return to Nebraska, play another year, get his degree and perhaps be drafted in a higher round next year.

The signing deadline is July 13, about a month earlier than previous years.

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"I'm going to go up and start my summer league season," said Christensen. "They (the Marlins) can watch me play, I'm sure, a little bit. I'll have to see what they offer and what they want to do and I'll either take it or go back to school."

Christensen hit .311 at Nebraska this year as a junior with 10 homers and 48 RBIs. He played mostly shortstop for the Cornhuskers, but was drafted as an outfielder.

Christensen followed the draft Wednesday in Cedar Rapids and was relieved to finally see his name. "I saw it pop up on the computer," he said.

The draft was held Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. He was hoping to be drafted Tuesday, but they stopped after the 15th round without calling his name.

Christensen said his younger brother, Austin, is healthy again and playing in a summer college league in California. Austin Christensen, who starred at Kennedy High School, was redshirted at Nebraska this year as a freshman due to an arm injury.