

Metro all-stars excited to face Japan

Written by Jim Ecker

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To a man, the Metro all-stars who will face Japan in a special baseball game Tuesday night are excited and curious.

They're excited to play in an all-star game with their friends from the Metro schools and they're curious to see how the team from Yamanashi, Japan plays the game.

The Japan-Metro All-Star Classic will be held at Kennedy High School Tuesday night, with the pre-game ceremony beginning at 7 p.m.

Tickets cost \$5 and can be purchased at the gate.

"You get the great experience of playing international baseball -- it's a different style of baseball -- and before going off to college I'm able to play with my Metro buddies," said Xavier first baseman Mack Mattke. "It's kind of the best of both worlds in two ways."

All 15 players on the Metro All-Star team practiced at Kennedy Monday night and will practice again Tuesday morning. The team from Japan has compiled a 3-1-1 record on its six-game tour of Iowa and the Metro players anticipate a stiff challenge.

"It's going to be a lot of fun," said Kennedy's Alex Hayden, who was named to the elite all-state team this year.

Tuesday's game is part of an exchange program between Yamanashi, Japan and Iowa. A team from Yamanashi defeated a Perfect Game all-star team at Veterans Memorial Stadium in 2010 by stealing lots of bases and playing "small ball."

Hayden, a star pitcher and second baseman, is looking forward to the challenge. "That will be cool," he said. "It's obviously different than how we play."

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Mattke played in that game against Yamanashi in 2010. "I remember when I played them my sophomore year," he said. "It was a lot different."

Prairie second baseman Brayton Carlson has watched Japanese players on TV. Now he's looking forward to facing a team from Japan in person. "I'll be excited to get out there and see what it's like, facing a different type of baseball," he said.

"Anytime you get a chance to play baseball in an organized game, you always want to take that opportunity," he said. "Especially against a Japanese team. It's an awesome opportunity."

The Metro Sports Report selected the 15-man roster for the game. All of the players are graduated seniors who are heading to college soon.

The 15-man roster features Logan Ambrosy (Kennedy), Cody Bell (Kennedy), Carlson (Prairie), Hayden (Kennedy), Tyler Hedtke (Marion), Devon Jacobus (Kennedy), Addison Johnson (Marion), Colten Jourdan (Jefferson), Chico Lizarraga (Kennedy), Adam Lloyd (Kennedy), Mattke (Xavier), Michael Redmond (Linn-Mar), Jake Stolley (Linn-Mar), Chance Tiedtke (Jefferson) and Jason Velvick (Prairie).

Bret Hoyer, who led Kennedy to the semifinals of the Class 4A state tournament this year, is the head coach of the Metro All-Stars. Kennedy assistant coaches Jake Nauman and Jake Waddle are the Metro assistant coaches.

The Japan-Metro All-Star Classic is being presented by the Metro Sports Report in conjunction with the Kennedy Baseball Support Group and Iowa AAU. The primary sponsors are Genghis Grill, Carlos O'Kelly's and Bloomsbury Farm. The Cedar Rapids Convention & Visitors Bureau also has contributed to the event.