

Japan-Metro Classic: David Kuhn

Written by Jim Ecker

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David Kuhn figured his dream of playing baseball in a Minor League stadium ended this summer when the Marion Indians did not reach the state tournament at Principal Park in Des Moines, but the story has a happy ending.

Kuhn enjoyed a terrific year for Coach Steve Fish and the Indians and was invited to play in the IHSCBA all-star series this past weekend at Ashford University Field, home of the Clinton LumberKings in the Midwest League.

That went well as his Large Schools East team won the series on Sunday, and now he'll play for the local Metro ballclub in the Japan-Metro All-Star Classic at Veterans Memorial Stadium Thursday night.

"This is really fun," Kuhn said Saturday in Clinton. "In fact, I joked with Coach Fish. I told him I've never played on a field except for a high school field. Now I get to play five games on minor league fields. That's kind of fun."

Kuhn has always played baseball for fun, keeping the game in perspective. It's one of the reasons he'll sacrifice a chance to play college baseball at the Division III level and enroll at Iowa State later this summer to study materials engineering.

Kuhn will wear his Marion High School uniform in the Japan-Metro Classic Thursday, then probably never play for an organized baseball team again. He's the only member of the Metro all-stars who does not plan to play sports in college.

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He's ready to quit playing the game he enjoys so much.

"It will be incredibly difficult, but at the same time I know my future is not in baseball," he said. "Do I love the game? Will I stay around it? Will I get into coaching or something like that? Absolutely.

"But my spot is not playing the game in the future," he said. "I'm going to be just fine going to school, getting a good education and then moving on to a career that will sustain me.

"Baseball is fun. I love it, but I'm not the All-American athlete that I once thought I would be."

Kuhn hit .353 with 26 RBIs for Marion this season and was 18-for-18 in stolen bases. He also compiled a 5-2 record and 2.09 ERA on the mound, with 60 strikeouts in 57 innings.

He played right field for the Indians when he wasn't pitching, for the most part, but he played second base in the IHSBCA all-star series and did a terrific job in the infield.

Fish said Kuhn always came to the ballpark with a smile, even while helping his mother, Laura, through her second bout with cancer this year. And Fish said Kuhn could certainly play baseball in college if he wanted to follow that path.

"He does all the little things, he understands the game. He makes people around him better," said Fish.

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"But he sees the big picture down the road, and that's to be real successful in life. There are going to be times when baseball is going to be over, and he's OK with that.

"I couldn't be more proud of the kid," said Fish. "I'm going to miss him, because he makes it fun coming to the baseball field."

The pre-game ceremony for the Japan-Metro Classic begins at 7 p.m. Thursday, with the first pitch at approximately 7:15. The gates at Perfect Game Field will open at 6 p.m.

All tickets cost \$5. Children 5-and-under will be admitted for free.

The Metro-Japan All-Star Classic is being presented by the Metro Sports Report. The sponsors are the Kernels, the Premier Mortgage company and Iowa AAU.