

Saints' Mattke future PG poster material?

Written by

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For just more than half his life, Cedar Rapids Xavier junior Mack Mattke has looked around at quite an assortment of portraits of many of the best baseball players the state of Iowa has produced over the past decade.

The poster-sized photos are displayed on the walls of Perfect Game USA, a baseball scouting and recruiting service located on Rockford Road SW, just across the street from the Cedar Rapids Ice Arena and just down the street from Perfect Game Field at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

Just inside the door of the batting cage area at PG, there is one long banner that features the photos of Iowa City High's Jon Gilmore, West Delaware's B.J. Hermesen, Marshalltown's Jeff Clement and Des Moines area standouts Jeremy Hellickson and Matt Macri, among others.

All of those players are in the professional ranks at some level right now, and all participated at Perfect Game events.

But please excuse Mattke if he pays special attention to the portrait of Ryan Sweeney, a 2003 Xavier grad who was a second-round MLB Draft pick and is now an outfielder with the Oakland Athletics. There also is a photo of Travis Sweet, a 2004 Xavier grad who was also drafted professionally and played collegiately at the University of Iowa.

A portrait of Xavier's Jon Keller (Class of '10), an 11th-round selection by the Seattle Mariners last spring, is sure to go up soon.

Mattke, the son of Mark and Inez Mattke of Marion, is a 17-year-old, 6-foot-6, 225-pound catcher/first-baseman/pitcher who played regularly for Coach Dave Schemmel on the Xavier varsity last season as a sophomore, and has been looking at those PG portraits for more than half his life.

"I've been doing this since I was 8 years old and I enjoy every part of it," Mattke said while

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taking part in the PG Pitcher/Catcher Indoor Showcase at Perfect Game this weekend. "When I was in fifth grade I was warming up kids in that bullpen right over there and I worked all the way up to where I'm doing this now."

According to the IHSA's QuikStats web site, Mattke started 33 of Xavier's 39 games last season, and hit .374 with eight doubles, 14 RBIs and 20 runs scored. The Saints (23-16) lost in a Class 4A state substate final to Iowa City West, coming up just one game short of a state tournament berth.

Mattke uses that loss as motivation.

"I just try to get better here (at Perfect Game) and then go into the high school season and be the best that I can be and help my team out," he said. "We want to get to the state tournament. That's our goal."

Mattke has been extremely active in Perfect Game events. The Indoor Showcase this past weekend was his 16th PG event, including appearances at the WWBA World Championship in Jupiter, Fla., the National Underclass Showcase in Fort Myers, Fla., and the PG/EvoShield National Upperclass in Goodyear, Ariz. He also has been at several events at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

He was one of a handful of Metro athletes at this weekend's PG Indoor. The others included standouts Austin Christensen from Kennedy, Dakota Freese from Washington, Cale Cannoy and Addison Johnson from Marion, and former Linn-Mar prep Andrew Hanse (class of '09) who is now at Ellsworth Community College.

Christensen has signed with Nebraska and Freese with Louisiana State University-Eunice, a top feeder program for national power LSU.

Mattke can't yet begin to think about following in the professional footsteps of the Sweeney brothers (Ryan and Kellen) or any of the Iowa standouts now playing professionally. He simply longs to follow Christensen and Freese - Sweet and Jefferson's Nick Nordgren - into the

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college ranks.

“I would love to play college baseball,” he said, “that’s my goal.”

Mattke is also a member of the Saints’ basketball team, where he averages 6.3 points and 2.5 rebounds per game, with 11 steals and eight blocks in 18 games.