

Bell fell in love with baseball again

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 20 June 2016 03:02 -



WATKINS - Cody Bell was a member of the golf team at the University of Northern Iowa for two years, but he missed playing baseball so much that he transferred to Mount Mercy University two years ago and resumed his career on the diamond.

It turned out to be a great move.

Bell enjoyed a sensational season for Mount Mercy this season and he starred again on the mound Sunday for Fairfax in the first game of their Iowa Valley League doubleheader against Watkins.

Bell tossed a complete game and allowed only two earned runs as Fairfax topped the Mudhens, 7-3, on a warm day at Watkins. He allowed seven hits with seven strikeouts and one walk.

Watkins captured the second game, 8-2, for its first victory of the season.

Bell compiled an 8-2 record and 1.65 at Mount Mercy this year and was named first team all-conference. He also hit .298 with 18 RBIs for the Mustangs, who finished with a 34-14 record.

Bell, 22, was a multi-sport athlete at Cedar Rapids Kennedy in golf, basketball and baseball, but he wanted to try golf in college and enrolled at Northern Iowa four years ago, leaving baseball behind. His golf career never fully blossomed in college and as time went by he realized he sorely missed playing ball.

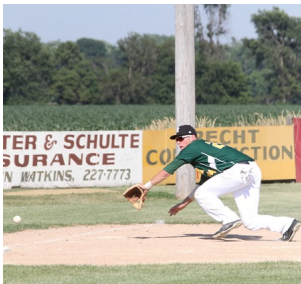
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Bell decided to transfer to Mount Mercy, where he rejoined several of his former Kennedy teammates like Jimmy Lizarraga, Alex Hayden and Adam Lloyd.

"A lot of my friends went there and I really missed baseball," he said Sunday. "It felt like it would be a good place for me to go and pick up my baseball career again and it was close to home, so that was a big part of it."



Bell has been somewhat of a late bloomer as a pitcher. He threw only 18 innings as a junior in high school in 2011 and only 26 1/3 innings as a senior in 2012, and he did not pitch in organized ball in 2013 and 2014 when he was playing golf at UNI.

Bell tossed only 12 2/3 innings at Mount Mercy last year, but he burst onto the scene this season with 71 strong innings for Coach Jack Dahm and the Mustangs. He allowed only 13 earned runs and showed excellent control with 54 strikeouts and only 12 walks.

Bell, who stands 6-foot-4, has a fresh arm and strong arm.

"We had a really good staff in high school, so there wasn't really much room for me there," he said. "I developed a lot at Mount Mercy and had a good pitching coach (Brian Miller) and Coach Dahm helped a lot so I really progressed."

In retrospect, spending two full years away from the game paid off.

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"I definitely think it helped," he said. "It definitely brought my love for baseball back. I missed it a lot.

"Overall I do think the layoff helped in kind of refreshing everything for me."

Bell was promoted to the varsity as a sophomore in 2010 and helped Kennedy win the Class 4A state title. He hit .381 with five homers and 41 RBIs as a junior, then hit .466 with five homers and 45 RBIs as a senior.

He's still a good hitter and went 4-for-6 in Sunday's doubleheader against Watkins with two RBIs.

Bell is playing with a bunch of his friends from Kennedy and Mount Mercy on the Fairfax ballclub, which has a 5-3 record this season. He enjoys putting on the uniform with all those former Cougars and Mustangs by his side.

"It's definitely fun to get back out and play with all these guys," he said. "It really keeps it fun. I really enjoy doing it. They're all competitive, they all want to win."

Bell was a senior at Mount Mercy this season and finished his degree in finance, but his college baseball career might not be over. According to NAIA rules, he has two more years of eligibility with the Mustangs and he might keep playing.

"I'm possibly thinking about doing grad school and coming back," he said. "I'm still running it through. I'd definitely be happy to go back there, but I've got to figure out the finances and figure out if I can get a job and start grad school.

"I'd say it's 50-50 for now."

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Coach Dahm would love to see his big right-hander on the mound again. "He's definitely encouraged me to come back," said Bell. "He'd be happy to have me again."

Whether he plays for Mount Mercy again or not, he's glad he made the switch from golf to baseball two years ago.

"It was good, it was fun," he said. "I wished we could have gone a little farther in the conference tournament, but overall we put together a pretty good year. I don't really regret anything about coming there and I enjoyed every minute of it."

Lizarraga went 4-for-4 with two doubles and an RBI for Fairfax in the first game Sunday. Bell was 3-for-4 with three straight singles. Daniels and Hayden had two hits and Hayden had a two-run double.

Danny Bales, another Kennedy grad, pitched the first three innings for Watkins and took the loss.

Watkins broke loose for 13 hits in the nightcap for its first victory after seven losses. Jack Strellner and Jonny Frese had three hits apiece. D.J. Utley, Brady Stramer and Addison Johnson had two hits. Utley, Johnson and Jeremy Schneiders had two RBIs.

Evan Boddicker pitched 5 1/3 strong innings for Watkins for the victory. Luke Franzenburg tossed 1 2/3 innings in relief and did not allow any runs for the Mudhens.

David Yancey had two hits and scored two runs for Fairfax in the nightcap.

GAME 1

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Fairfax □ □ **103 300 0 - 7 14 2**

Watkins □ □ **000 012 0 - 3 7 1**

Bell and Lizarraga. Bales, C.Frese and Johnson. W - Bell. L - Bales.

GAME 2

Fairfax □ □ **000 101 0 - 2 5 7**

Watkins □ □ **120 032 x - 8 13 1**

Lloyd, Milks (5) and Lizarraga. Boddicker, Franzenburg (5) and Johnson. W - Boddicker. L - Lloyd.