

# HS Baseball – Not the Only Path

By Therron Brockish

Ten years ago I looked at the high school baseball landscape in Arizona and decided to start a team for high school kids that were cut or didn't want to play high school baseball for various reasons. Being a former college coach, I can attest from experience that what a player accomplished in high school made absolutely no difference when it came to making decisions about my college roster. Those decisions were made based on their performance during the Fall practice season with the other players in camp. I've tried to convey that message to the HS players that find themselves not making their HS teams. It's definitely a blow to a kid's ego to have someone tell him "you're not good enough". But there is much more that goes into the formation of high school rosters. Some of the factors are:

**\*Physical maturity and readiness:** boys mature physically at different ages. In early high school, many boys are under-developed physically and don't have the size or strength that they will ultimately have once they reach adulthood. Some guys are further behind than others. Being slightly built and lacking strength/speed to perform can be a major factor in who coaches keep on their roster and who they let go.

**\*Personnel:** just like in college and professional baseball, there may be a HS player at a specific position that is blocking the road for opportunity for other players. This "starter" may have more physical tools or has established himself as a high level player and, once that's established, is hard for other players to overcome.

**\*Politics/favorites:** this seems to happen in a lot of high schools. Playing favorites is very real but it can also be used as a crutch by the player that didn't make the team as an excuse for why they were cut. A lot of times, players that don't make the roster have players in front of them that are more talented or more ready at this particular point in their high school career. However, there have also been cases where it's going to be easier "politically" to keep certain players and cut others of similar skill set.

**\*Poor evaluator:** sometimes high school coaches don't have the best evaluation skills (shocker!). As a former full-time professional scout, my job was to evaluate baseball talent for a living. My livelihood depended on the accuracy of my evaluations. I know that my player evaluations were not always 100% correct. I think that most professional scouts would agree that sometimes we "miss on players". That's the nature of the business. It's an art, not a science (despite what the analytics generation in MLB today believes). And as scouts, we do it every day, year around. High school coaches do not always possess the high level evaluation skills to get every player right. So ultimately, they cut kids that might have been able to help them at some point.

Below are some recent examples of players that have participated in my program that have made a college baseball roster.

**Dustin Wells** – LHP, cut his Sr. year of HS. I encouraged Dustin to keep playing. Left-handed pitchers are valuable and I saw something in Dustin that I believed would prove valuable to a college program. 4 years later, he was named Northwest Conference **Pitcher of the Year** as a Jr. at George Fox University. Not his team's pitcher of the year, but the entire conference! Pretty impressive for a kid that didn't make his high school team his senior year.

<http://athletics.georgefox.edu/sports/bsb/2015-16/releases/20160426pgo0ch>

**Mike Pappas** – C, was informed as a Jr. that he would have to play JV baseball and made a decision to play with my spring team and transfer high schools his Sr. season. He made the decision to drive 2 hours each direction to play with my club in Phoenix every weekend. Mike ended up being a 4-year player at Marian University.

**Blake Newman** – 3B, did not make his HS roster his Soph. year. Blake was growing almost too fast into his body. His feet were so big that it affected his foot speed and he was gangly and almost a player without a true position as his growth spurt came so fast. But he had skills and a passion for the game and a “no quit” attitude. Today he is 6’5/225 and a 2-year starter at San Diego City College and one of the team leaders on and off the field.

**Fabian and Francisco Palacios** – 2 great kids, these twins were physically under-developed in early high school. They probably weighed 110 pounds when they came to my workout after not making their Freshman team. 4 years later and neither of them played an inning of high school baseball. They continued to grow and work to improve their baseball skills. Both guys went to Scottsdale Community college and made the roster for 2 years. Francisco contributed as an infielder while Fabian excelled on the mound as a pitcher. Fabian’s pitching success led him to a Division I scholarship to play at Utah Valley University. That’s pretty impressive for guys that were never deemed “good enough” to make their HS team. It’s also a tribute to their persistence and passion for the game and their willingness to work and improve and believe in themselves.

**Zach Chilton** – C, was cut from his HS team as a Jr. I know from experience to never give up on a catcher. I signed two catchers that played Major League baseball. Catching is a tough job. Very few guys want to do it. Zach continued to work hard, transferred schools his Sr. year and is currently playing at the University of Saint Katherine in California.

These are only a few examples of players achieving post-high school success over the past 10 years. All of their stories are different but all of these players have similar things in common. They all chose to not let their destiny be determined by other people. They all made the conscious choice to continue to play baseball, work hard at developing their skills and continue to believe in themselves. They determined their own fate as a baseball player.



Dustin Wells



Fabian Palacios



Blake Newman