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Fit for the love of baseball

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During the past few years, there has been a lot of speculation about sports and parents who might push young athletes too hard. While some reports suggest that children are "over-involved," other reports state the more active and involved kids are, the greater chance they will become successful later in life.

The counter?

Some believe all that involvement may backfire and result in burnout or resentment. However, with Naperville's Matt Cmiel, being active and being an athlete is something that he has never questioned. As part of the Naperville Central High School baseball 2009 Naperville Sun All-City Team, Matt is not only passionate about baseball, but motivated by being part of a winning team.

Matt has been playing baseball for 14 years, and it started where many of Naperville's kids do, with T-ball. Climbing up the sports ladder, his next stop was Coach Pitch, Naperville Little League and travel team.

When Matt became a freshman at Central, he began working under the tutelage of coach Bill Seiple.

"I've always loved the game," Matt said. "Whether it's for a conference win, or just playing around with my friends, it's just a sport that I've always liked."

His parents agree that he was born to play baseball.

"Matt has always been very athletic so pushing him to do more has never been an issue," his mom Ann Cmiel said. "He participated in soccer and basketball early but was drawn more enthusiastically to baseball. He discovered that his speed and hand/eye coordination worked well for baseball."

Given that baseball is a seasonal sport, winter brings a different kind of "game" to Matt as he focuses more on the art of the sport with agility camps, weight training, college and prospect camps. For a change of pace, he will play intramural basketball to stay in shape.

Every athlete has their certain rituals or "secrets" to success, and Matt is no different.

"Conditioning is really important. Running and stretching makes a big difference," Matt said. "Since I play center field, I've focused strength training on my throwing arm (curls, shrugs and bands) to be the best in particular position."

Along with a rigorous training program, nutrition comes in to play as well.

"I drink protein shakes after workouts (especially weight training)," Matt said. "I also stay hydrated drinking water, Propel or Gatorade."

Matt encourages kids who want to follow their passion to practice.

"Practice, practice and practice again. It really does make a difference. No matter what sport you like, learning the fundamentals and staying focused on them will lead you in the right direction.

Many colleges asked that he bring his talent and passion to their school. Matt finally made the decision to head to the University of Illinois at Springfield.

"We are proud of his decision to go to University of Illinois at Springfield," Ann said." Matt picked UIS (Division 2) because of the new start up baseball program, visits with the head coach, and playing time.

"The Great Lakes Conference is known as one of the most competitive D2 conferences in the country. Matt will have the opportunity to play four years of college ball and get a solid education."

At a time where we read more about inactivity and childhood obesity, it is nice see there are those kids and families that believe a solid work ethic along with regular activity is the key to success, both on and off the playing field.

Good luck Matt, we look forward to reading about your continued success in the coming year.

Participate in a unique fitness routine? Contact Nicki Anderson at nicki@realityfitness.com. She wants to spread the word.

[When and Why a Player Should Play Travel Baseball](#)

From Youth Baseball Blog

[Matt's Mailbag: March 31, 2010](#)

From The Hall of Very Good

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