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3 Majors turn in their uniforms for a shot at the majors

By SEAN MEYER, The Londoner

Chris Dennis, 18, had to turn in his London Majors' jersey after being selected in the 13th round, 401st overall, by the Milwaukee Brewers in the Major League Baseball amateur draft. Chris wasn't the only London player selected. Teammate Adam Arnold (below) was also selected by the Brewers in the 44th round and Mitch Delaney was chosen by the Chicago White Sox in the 21st round.



SEAN MEYER PHOTO

Chris Dennis wouldn't be the first, or likely the last, 18-year-old to spend the better part of a spring day in front of his computer.

However, in this particular case, Chris wasn't playing the latest video game or an intense game of solitaire. No, Chris was instead anxiously waiting to find out about his future- well, as far as the world of baseball goes at least.

Chris, a catcher and outfield with the London Majors, was selected in the 13th round, 401st overall, by the Milwaukee Brewers in the Major League Baseball amateur draft. While the first round was actually televised this year, the rest of the draft is conducted online with young men like Chris waiting sometimes long hours to find out if some team is willing to take a chance on them.

For Chris though, he had a pretty good idea where he would be selected.

"My agent had been talking to Milwaukee, they said they were going to take me. We didn't know the exact round, but they said they would take me somewhere between the sixth round and the 13th," Chris says. "So I spent a lot of time just waiting. I kind of knew where they said they would take me, but you just never know. When my name came up, when I got the call from the Brewers, it was pretty exciting. It was something I have wanted ever since I was a little kid."

Chris actually put his major league dreams temporarily on hold last year when he was selected in 38th round by the Tampa Bay Devil Rays. After declining to sign with Tampa, he went back into this year's draft - but not before signing with London.

"I knew I had to work hard, to improve my draft position. So when Roop (Chanderdat, the Majors' co-owner, general manager and field manager) called and asked me to come play for him, I thought this was a great opportunity," says Chris, who signed with London back in February. "I think I got a great opportunity here, great coaching. I don't think there is any question this is a great program and being here gave me an opportunity to show what I can do."

As for what he can do, Roop says the sky is the limit for Chris.

"Chris needs to keep improving, keep working on those baseball skills. He has tremendous raw power. He is physically remarkably strong. But there is more to playing in the Majors than strength," Roop says. "Chris needs to find a position, show he can play defence at the Major League level, show he can hit the outside pitch to the opposite field. But in our league, in just a short time, he showed he can do that. So I think there is no question he has the ability."

Chris will be reporting to Tempe, Arizona and the Brewers' rookie league affiliate. However, he won't be going alone.

Adam Arnold knows the excitement Chris is feeling. The 21-year-old Majors' pitcher was drafted in the 41st round, also by the Brewers.

"It's so exciting; you just aren't sure what is going to happen. Where you are going to be selected, what team, what round. My emotions were really stirring all day," Adam says. "I was sitting there in front of my computer from about 11:30 a.m. till after 5 p.m. and I need a break. I went, took a shower, went and relaxed. Then I heard my sister yelling my name . . . it was just a great feeling. I had talked to the Brewers; they had shown a lot of interest. But when it finally happened it was like a dream come true."

Before leaving for the desert southwest, Adam was quick to point out he recognizes that being drafted is just the first step in the long journey he now has to take.



"Nobody knows what will happen, but I know I have an opportunity. That's all I could ask for. Once I'm down there I know I will have to stay mentally focused, learn all I can," Adam says. "I know I have great arm strength, I have velocity. But I have only been pitching for three years. I know I have a lot to still learn."

Chris and Adam weren't the only Majors selected in the draft as Mitch Delaney, 18, was selected in the 21st round by the Chicago White Sox.

While Chris and Adam have signed Major League contracts, Mitch is still weighing his decision.

And whether Mitch should choose to sign with the White Sox or remain another year with the Majors, Roop says he is thrilled for all three young men and excited about their futures.

However, at the same time he knows it makes his life more difficult as the Majors' field manager and general manager.

"It's really typical of our league, you have to go out and find the talent. You have some successes, you have some failures. This year when we started I knew we had some young players who could be drafted, but that's what we want. We want players who are eager to learn, guys who want to play," Roop says. "Sure, now we've lost three top notch guys, it's going to hurt for a while. But it will also give an opportunity to guys here still on this roster to step up and hopefully they will do that."

And while Roop deals with lineup issues as the field manager, he says he will also have to put in more work while wearing his general manager's hat too.

"It shows me I need to go out and recruit more. Chris Dennis was one of our best power hitters through the first nine games, you don't easily replace that," Roop says. "We have to replace Mitch and we need another pitcher now. Actually, we probably need another pitcher too besides replacing Adam. It just reminds me there is always work to be done."

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