

## 5-sport Schebler focuses on baseball

Written by Jim Ecker

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Scott Schebler played five sports at Cedar Rapids Prairie and was all-state in three of them, so he squeezed as much out of his high school years as possible.

He believes his hyper-active schedule may have slowed his development as a pro baseball player, but he has great memories from his years at Prairie and no regrets. He played football, basketball, baseball, soccer and ran track.

"I'm glad I did all five," he told the Metro Sports Report this week. "If I would have narrowed it down, yes, I could have taken away a little bit of the learning curve I'm facing now, but I wouldn't change my mind today. If I could go back and do it again, I wouldn't change anything."

Schebler, 20, is a rookie outfielder with the Los Angeles Dodgers after signing a pro contract for \$300,000 last August. He's currently assigned to extended spring training in Glendale, Ariz., where he practices and plays every day.

Schebler hit a robust .561 with seven home runs and 55 RBIs as a senior at Prairie in 2009, then hit .446 with 20 homers and 82 RBIs at Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) last season. He signed with Wichita State and was leaning that way, but the Dodgers convinced him to turn pro after taking him in the 26th round of the 2010 draft.

It went right down to the deadline in mid-August last summer: Sign with the Dodgers or go to Wichita State? The Dodgers sweetened the pot by agreeing to pay for four years of Schebler's college education when he's ready for more school, even though he's already finished one year in junior college.

It went back and worth.

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"It was a pretty hectic time," Schebler said. "I was being drawn every which way. I changed my mind daily, to tell you the truth."

Wichita State Coach Gene Stephenson, one of the top college coaches in the country, flew into Cedar Rapids, came to Schebler's house, made a last-second pitch and flew home the same day.

"I was like, if he does this, I'm a pretty big prospect," Schebler remembers thinking. "He made some pretty valid points when he was there, about how much college can help you out and how you need your degree. He was a pretty good salesman, to tell the truth."

"I just had to hear both sides," he said. "I was overwhelmed when the Wichita State coach came and talked to me, and he kept blurting out what's bad about signing. He really didn't go into the positives about signing."

"Then I talked to the Dodgers, and they started talking about the positives. I just kind of weighed both and made my decision."

Schebler is convinced he made the right decision to turn pro, just like he made the right decision to play five sports in high school. The \$300,000 signing bonus, plus four years of a paid college education, is a bigger package than most 26th-round picks are given.

"I'm considered a prospect," Schebler said. "I'm not a 26th rounder that they picked up and they're thinking they got him for cheap."

Most first-year pros are assigned to extended spring training, so it's not like Schebler is behind the curve. Kellen Sweeney of Cedar Rapids was taken in the second round by Toronto last June, and he's in extended spring training in Florida.

Schebler was naturally disappointed when the Dodgers did not assign him to a Class A team

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this spring. The Dodgers have a Class A club in the Midwest League in Midland, Mich., and he might be shipped there at some point, but for now he's training in Arizona and learning the ropes.

"Obviously, I wish I were in Midland or something like that," he said. "After looking at it and how much I've learned, I think it's actually been a good thing for me to be here (in extended spring training), because every day we learn something new."

Schebler admitted he has a lot to learn.

"The baseball is amazing. There's nothing like it," he said. "I mean, I'm still a little bit 'deer in the headlights.' It's been fun.

"The baseball stuff is awesome. There's so much to process that it would make sense that it would take three or four years to get up to the big leagues. There is just that much information to look at.

"And then you have to get the whole mental part, too. That's a lot to put into a package."

Schebler is a 6-foot-1, 210-pound package of speed and power. He's playing all three outfield positions, but he's learned there's more to the game than speed and strength. "I learned that real quick," he said.

Schebler spent time with the Dodgers' Triple-A players in spring training and loved the experience. Overall, he said he hit about .400 in spring training and absorbed quite a bit. He hit a lot of singles, but was not driving the ball with consistency.

"They would rather have a guy strike out 30 times and hit eight bombs, than a guy who is just a singles guy," he said.

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Schebler enjoyed his time with the Triple-A players.

"It was awesome. It was a great time," he said. "They're very relaxed, they played relaxed. They're making hard plays, but they're making it look very easy. I learned real quick that loose muscles are quicker than tense muscles."

Schebler and his rookie-level teammates are staying in a Hampton Inn in Arizona. "Yes, there's a pool," he said.

He wakes up about 6:15 or 6:30 a.m. and shuttle buses take the players to the Dodgers' training complex in Glendale. They eat breakfast at the park, let their food digest, have a meeting and then start their physical training with running and lifting.

All of the players do "early work" on defense, offense, bunting or baserunning from 8:30 to 9:30, then regular practice begins at 9:30 with stretching, individual drills, team drills and batting practice. They break for lunch, then play a game against another team or have an intrasquad scrimmage.

"It's a pretty full day, to tell you the truth," he said.

The players get to relax at night at the hotel, although Schebler said it tends to get boring. "I never thought in my life I would be like, 'Man, I wish I had some schoolwork to do or something.'"

He's in baseball school now, and it's a full-time job.

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