

Utley switching to DMACC for baseball

Written by Jim Ecker

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D.J. Utley had his head in the classroom at Iowa State University this fall as a regular student, but his heart was on an imaginary baseball field somewhere.

He missed the game so much that he's decided to do something about it.

Utley has left Iowa State after one semester and has enrolled at Des Moines Area Community College in Boone for the winter semester so he can play baseball.

Utley, a slugging first baseman, hit a school-record 14 home runs, drove in 50 runs and hit .441 last season at Cedar Rapids Prairie before putting his bat away and moving to Ames.

He enjoyed Iowa State, where he planned to focus on becoming an engineer, but he couldn't get baseball out of his system.

"I guess I was thinking about it the whole time," he said Friday. "I knew I didn't want to regret it for the rest of my life, you know what I mean?"

Utley contacted the DMACC baseball coaches about a month ago.

"I e-mailed them and said I was interested in coming and trying out for the team, and they called me back the next day and said they were really interested," he related. "Later that week I went and tried out and a couple of days later they called me and said they had a spot for me and would like for me to join the team, so that's what I decided to do."

Utley was a late bloomer at Prairie. He hit .282 with no homers and 13 RBIs as a junior and didn't see himself playing baseball in college, even after he burst onto the scene as a senior. He heard that DMACC wanted to talk to him last season, but did not pursue it.

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"I guess I had my mind made up about Iowa State, so I didn't really talk to anybody too seriously," he said. "I guess I thought it was too late."

Better late than never, as it turned out. "I loved Iowa State, it's a great school, but it just didn't feel right, knowing I wasn't going to be playing baseball," he said.

Iowa State does not have a varsity baseball program, so that was not an option.

Utley will be eligible at DMACC this season as a freshman. He reports to school on Jan. 4 and practice begins the next day. "It's coming up pretty quick here," he said.

He's been working out at Perfect Game USA in Cedar Rapids with his high school buddies, getting ready for his new opportunity in college.

"I'm excited. Definitely excited," he said.