

Schenck-Joblinske signs with Aggies

Written by Jim Ecker

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Eric Schenck-Joblinske hopes to prove that a kid from a small town in Iowa can play big-time college baseball at Texas A&M University.

Schenck-Joblinske, an outfielder who hit .362 for the Kirkwood Eagles last season, signed his national letter-of-intent with Texas A&M Wednesday at Johnson Hall on the KCC campus.

"It still hasn't sunk in yet," he said. "I don't think it will set in until I step on campus."

Schenck-Joblinske grew up in New Hartford and attended Dike-New Hartford High School before coming to Kirkwood in 2012.

He had an offer from the Iowa Hawkeyes and new UI coach Rick Heller, but he couldn't resist the opportunity to play for Texas A&M. The Aggies play in the baseball-rich Southeastern Conference after leaving the Big 12 and have reached the NCAA tournament the last six years in a row.

The Aggies ranked ninth in the nation in attendance in 2013 with 4,523 fans per game at Blue Bell Park in College Station, Texas.

It was an offer he couldn't refuse.

"I was really close to Iowa, and then Texas A&M kind of came in late," Schenck-Joblinske said. "I thought it was an opportunity I couldn't pass up. If I would have chosen Iowa or anywhere else, I would always wonder 'What if?'"

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The Southeastern Conference is a powerful baseball league with some of the top teams in the country. "That conference is as close as you can get to playing professional baseball, talent-wise at least," he said.

Schenck-Joblinske will play for Kirkwood again in 2014, then it will be off to Texas A&M. He hit seven home runs with 28 RBIs last season and was named second team All-Region.

"I'm so excited for Eric," said Kirkwood Coach Todd Rima. "It couldn't happen to a better kid. He's earned everything, to be able to play in the SEC."

Texas A&M saw Schenck-Joblinske play in a junior college showcase last month at Kirkwood and at Cedar Rapids Prairie and liked what they saw.

"They came up to watch another kid," he said. "They liked my left-handed bat, and after the showcase they were in contact with me a little bit."

The Aggies offered a partial scholarship Oct. 16. He visited Texas A&M two weeks ago, returned home on a Saturday night and accepted the offer two days later after talking to his family and Rima.

"They love his bat. Great bat speed," Rima said. "And I think they love his effort. They play the game with great effort, and nobody does that better than Eric. His effort is tremendous. I think it's a good fit. They want hard-nosed kids who aren't afraid to work, and that's Eric."

"He brings energy and effort every day. Tremendous in the field. Great leader. Leads by example. He's the type of kid you like to build your program around."

Rima thinks Schenck-Joblinske's move to Texas A&M could reap benefits for Kirkwood as well.

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"It's big for us," he said. "It can show kids that Kirkwood can take you anywhere. That's what we believe, and Eric believes that. When you get people in the program like Eric, good things happen. You hope people see that."

Rima is looking forward to seeing Schenck-Joblinske play for the Aggies, beginning with the 2015 campaign.

"After Eric decided, I said I'm going to be in Omaha to watch you in the College World Series some day," Rima remarked. "That would be pretty neat. And he has goals of playing professionally. What an opportunity. He's going to get seen by a lot of people every day. I just hope it works out for him."

Michael Wacha, a star pitcher for Texas A&M in 2012, ended up pitching for the St. Louis Cardinals in the World Series this year. Wacha was born in Iowa City, but moved to Texas with his family when he was an infant.

Schenck-Joblinske will be moving from Iowa to Texas next year as an excited young man. "It still hasn't sunk in yet," he said.