

Gordon proud of his all-star brother

Written by Jim Ecker

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Cedar Rapids Kernels shortstop Nick Gordon is mighty proud of his older brother.

Dee Gordon, 27, of the Miami Marlins has been selected as the starting second baseball for the National League in the Major League All-Star Game that will be played next Tuesday night in Cincinnati.

Gordon also made the all-star team last year when he played for the Los Angeles Dodgers. He got traded during the offseason but has not missed a beat, hitting .339 for Miami for the third-best batting average in the National League.

"I talked to him yesterday," Nick Gordon said Monday afternoon. "He's excited."

Nick Gordon, 19, is excited too.

"It's a blessing. My brother works really hard," he said. "He loves the game. It was a blessing for him."

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Gordon is not sure if he'll get a chance to attend the All-Star Game. All of the minor league teams will be idle next Tuesday for the All-Star Game, for there's only a short window.

The Kernels play at Kane County in the northwest Chicago suburbs next Monday afternoon and have a night game at home next Wednesday night, so Gordon would have to hustle to get to Cincinnati and back.

Naturally, he'd love to go and cheer for his brother in person.

"Of course. That would be a blessing to attend the all-star game," he said. "If I can make it and it doesn't conflict with what we're doing here, I'd love to go."

Gordon did not get to attend the all-star game last year when his brother made it for the first time, but he watched the game on TV and remembers what he thought when Dee got in the game.

"That's my brother. He beat me up in the mornings when I was little," he said, smiling and joking.

Nick Gordon was the fifth overall pick in the 2014 draft and is a young 19-year-old shortstop in the Midwest League, where most of the players are several years older and many played in college. He went 2-for-5 with a double and RBI Monday night in a 7-5 victory over Beloit, raising his batting average to .255 with 31 RBIs.

Gordon would like to be a Major League all-star someday himself, of course. "I've still got some developing to do," he acknowledged.

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Tom "Flash" Gordon, Dee and Nick's father, made the all-star team three times during his 21-year as a pitcher in the Major Leagues. That makes five all-star selections for the family so far.

Dee Gordon got to shag balls at all-star practices when his father was playing, but Nick never got the chance. "I was too young," he said with a smile.

Kernels manager Jake Mauer thinks Gordon has improved as a hitter the last few weeks. And the skipper said Gordon's defense at shortstop has been solid since Day 1, with a strong arm across the diamond.

"He's making better contact, more consistently," said Mauer. "It looks like he's shortening up his swing. His at-bats are way more competitive than they were 2-3 weeks ago.

"He's put a lot of work in. Tommy (Kernels hitting coach Tommy Watkins) has done a nice job with him. Some physical, some mental. A lot of it is approach.

"He's progressing nicely," said Mauer. "There aren't many 19-year-olds who come into this league and do real well, especially high school guys. You're playing against a lot of guys who were pretty good in college. It's a big task for anybody."

If Gordon gets promoted on a yearly basis, he could play for Fort Myers in the Florida State League next year when he's 20, then Chattanooga in Double-A when he's 21 and Rochester in Triple-A when he's 22. And then maybe the Major Leagues. And then maybe the All-Star Game.

"Everybody is kind of on their own time-table," said Mauer. "All of these guys want to be in the big leagues tomorrow.

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"You need to go through slumps, you need to fail. You need to be really down a little bit and learn how to be able to get through it, and play hurt, be sore, play day games after night games, get on a bus for seven hours."

Nick Gordon is experiencing all of that with the Cedar Rapids Kernels, but he's got an excellent role model in his own family to help guide the way.