

Jake Mauer gets call from Twins

Written by Jim Ecker

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It's taken 15 years as a player, coach and manager in the minor leagues with the Minnesota Twins organization, but Jake Mauer has finally gotten the call to experience life in the big leagues.

The Cedar Rapids Kernels manager will join the Twins as a coach for the last few weeks of the American League season after the Kernels are done in the Midwest League playoffs.

Mauer, 36, has spent his entire pro baseball career with the Twins and reached the Double-A level before an arm injury ended his playing days after the 2005 campaign.

Mauer grew up a Twins fan in the Twin Cities and his brother, Joe, has enjoyed an all-star career with the club and is their starting first baseman. Now Jake Mauer will be joining his younger brother in the Major Leagues and getting a first-hand look at Target Field from the ground level.

"I'm excited. It will be fun," Mauer said Wednesday afternoon. "It will be interesting to see how they do things."

By coincidence, Minnesota Manager Paul Molitor and Mauer both attended Cretin-Derham High School in St. Paul, Minn., although about 20 years apart. Mauer admires the Hall of Famer and applauds what Molitor has done in his first year with the Twins, getting them into playoff contention in September.

"I'm just excited to watch him work, how he runs his team, what they do and things they do to prepare," said Mauer. "Obviously it's a honor to be asked to go up, to learn and to experience that and just to be around a big-league club at playoff time. I think it would be pretty exciting for anybody."

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Mauer played with his brother Joe in the minor leagues and has been Joe's manager on several occasions in the minor leagues when Joe was on a rehab assignment, including last year in Cedar Rapids. Now they'll be on the same club in the Major Leagues.

"I probably talk to him once a week or so," Jake Mauer said. "We catch up on things. I told him and he was pretty excited. And I'm sure we'll have quite a few family members there that first home game, that's for sure."

Mauer is not sure when he'll make his debut with the Twins, but it probably will not be prior to Sept. 17 even if the Kernels make a quick exit from the playoffs.

Major League teams like to give their minor league managers and coaches a taste of the big leagues whenever they can. This is the first time Mauer has been invited, but Kernels hitting coach Tommy Watkins got the call in September of 2013.

The Twins selected Mauer in the 23rd round of the 2001 draft. He compiled a .256 batting average in five years in the minor leagues, then became a coach when his playing days came to an abrupt halt due to the arm injury.

"Everybody likes to think, if I hadn't gotten hurt I would be at the big-league level," he remarked. "That's nice to say, but you never really know how it will all shake out."

"My plan was to stay healthy, which didn't work out, and just keep trying to give yourself a chance and hopefully all that other stuff falls into place."

Mauer would love to become a coach or manager in the big leagues with the Twins some day. He's spent the last three years in Cedar Rapids and has no idea where he'll be assigned next season, but at least for now he's headed to the show.

Mauer has compiled a 494-447 record in eight years as a minor league manager and has led

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the Kernels to three straight berths in the Midwest League playoffs. He's coached a lot of players who are currently on the Twins roster, including young center fielder Byron Buxton, who starred for the Kernels in 2013.

Mauer is looking forward to seeing his brother, Buxton and all the others when he gets to the big leagues. He'll travel with the club for road trips and help as much as possible, although he does not know his exact assignments.

"I'll try not to cause too many problems," he said with a smile.

He's looking forward to pulling on a Major League jersey for the first time and fulfilling a dream.

"It will be exciting, no doubt about it," he said. "It will be fun to see the guys in that atmosphere, and hopefully it's a playoff atmosphere where they're still playing meaningful games. And hopefully we'll go down the stretch and maybe bring them some luck."