

Brad Hand

Contributed by Brian Salgado
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There isn't any doubt as to why Brad Hand catches the attention of scouts and college recruiters everywhere. Six-foot, 2-inch, 205-pound left-handed pitchers with fastballs clocking around 90 mph consistently plus a sharp curve don't come around every day.

But Troy Stein, co-head coach at Chaska (Minn.) High School, isn't jealous of talent evaluators at the next level — whether it is the pros or Arizona State, where Hand has committed — who will decide whether to keep Hand on path toward pitching or keep his bat in the lineup.

"Brad is a high potential left handed pitcher, but I think he is as good or better as a hitter," Stein says. "It makes it intriguing because he is being looked at in the draft as a pitcher, but he can hit just as well. I've yet to see someone dominate at the plate as much as he has."

In 2007, Hand had a 1.69 ERA and 72 strikeouts in 42 innings for Chaska. As a hitter who plays first base while not pitching, Chaska also hit .419 with six home runs. The video game-type numbers earned him a number of awards in 2007, including first-team all-state honors from the Minnesota Coaches Association.

"Because of his left arm and how hard he throws, he is being tailored as a pitcher," Stein says. "As far as I know, he loves to hit and loves to pitch, so it will be interesting to see how long that can happen."

It didn't take long for the folks at Chaska to realize what they had in Hand. He made the Hawks varsity squad as a freshman and mowing down hitters three years older than him with a fastball still in the low 80s.

While he has improved a great deal, Stein says Hand is still making the transition from thrower to pitcher. "The next phase that we talk about with Brad is not about lighting up the radar gun," Stein says. "It's about being a pitcher. It's about challenging guys and just going after the hitters and not falling behind in the count. It is about throwing strikes in the first three pitches. When he gets to that point, we will see someone that can be extremely tough."

Hand is ready for the next challenge, whether it is facing Division-1 hitters as a member of the Sun Devils roster or in the minors after getting drafted.

"[Arizona State] has a really good program and they always have a good team," Hand says. "I've also had a lot [Major League] team contact me and been at my games. I hope I have a good season and we'll see what happens with the draft. I might go there instead of college." While baseball will always be Hand's No. 1 love, Hand is also an accomplished hockey player. He has played hockey as far back as he can remember, and recalls fond memories before getting into organized play.

"I miss it a little bit," Hand says. "I've got a pond in my backyard, and my dad will flood the backyard of the house to create a hockey rink."

Aside from enjoying the sport, Hand says hockey also helped him get ready for the baseball season. "I've always loved baseball more, but hockey is a fun sport to play in the winter," Hand says. "You just get out there and it gets you ready for baseball and gets your legs strong."