

NU pitcher not relaxing in Cape Cod

By Steve Thomas
Staff Reporter

WAREHAM, Mass. — Nebraska pitcher Pat Leinen spends his summer days on Cape Cod thinking about developing a new pitch, a shot at the Big Eight Conference title next spring and his marketing major.

One would think Leinen's mind would be on the New York Mets — the team that drafted him in the 9th round of the major league draft five weeks ago. The Mets own the best record in the National League.

"I haven't talked to the Mets in

over a week," said Leinen, a 21-year old left-hander from Ralston. "I don't plan on contacting them again. There wasn't enough money. If they want to come up with more money, there's always room to negotiate."

Leinen won't say how much money would be enough to pull him away from Lincoln, where he still has two years of eligibility remaining.

But with a solid junior season, Leinen thinks he could be taken in the first three rounds of the draft next year. If so, he'll draw a larger signing bonus.

"I'm not upset at all with the way

the draft went," Leinen said. "I've never been drafted before. But I'm happy to go back to Nebraska. There are good facilities, good fans. A player has everything he needs there to make it."

This summer, Leinen is making it on Cape Cod, where he plays for the Wareham Gatemen in the Cape Cod Summer Baseball League. The NCAA-sanctioned league is recognized, along with the Alaskan League, as being one of the best leagues in the country. Leinen posted a 10-4 record at

Nebraska this season with an earned run average of 5.54. He pitched 100 2/3 innings, giving up 100 hits while striking out 48 batters.

This summer Leinen is 1-1. He has worked 25 innings, allowing 16 hits. His 1.42 ERA is good enough for eighth best in the 10-team league.

And he's doing it all in a resort area rich in beaches, sailboats and clam-bakes. The Atlantic Ocean practically lies at Leinen's doorstep and Boston's Fenway Park is just an hour away.

But, Leinen said, he's not at Cape Cod to vacation. He's here to work. He opened the season with a three-hit shutout against the team with the best record in the Cape League. In another outing, Leinen lasted 12 innings, allowing two earned runs. He didn't get

a decision in the 16-inning contest.

"I'm real satisfied with the way I've thrown this summer," he said. "I just try to be a smart pitcher. I spot my pitches. I'm not an overpowering pitcher and I know that. I just mix it up."

If good pitching performances become a habit for Leinen, he'll have a shot at making the Cape League all-star team, which will play Aug. 18-21 at Boardwalk and Baseball in Florida.

Leinen said velocity is the main obstacle keeping him from the big leagues. His fastball is clocked at 84 mph. Leinen said he needs another pitch, so he's experimenting with a spilt-finger fork ball.

"It's just something I'm trying out," he said. "This is a good time to do it. It's off-season and there's not a whole lot of pressure in the league."

And that's just fine with him, Leinen said.

"I like it here," he said. "There are some great players here. And it's pretty low key. There are a few scouts around — just like in Nebraska — but not much pressure. There's more pressure during the season at Nebraska."

Two summers ago, Leinen played in the Valley League in Virginia. Last summer, he was an Omaha Gladiator.

Leinen calls the Cape League the best he's played in, and compares the level of play to Oklahoma and Oklahoma State — two perennial Big Eight powers that are well represented by former players in the Cape League.

But one thing is different, Leinen said. This league uses wooden bats.

"It's a pitcher's dream," Leinen said. "There aren't any cheap hits that drop in. You get some of that with aluminum bats. But here, you have to hit the ball."



Leinen

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