

NU players drafted by Yankees, Brewers

By Todd Cooper
Staff Reporter

Nebraska second baseman Kevin Jordan and first baseman Bobby Benjamin will not return next season as both have already signed and reported to the rookie camps of the teams that drafted them.

Jordan, who was drafted in round 20 of the June 5 major league baseball draft, has reported to the New York Yankees camp in Tampa, Fla. Benjamin, taken in the seventh round, reported to the Milwaukee Brewers camp in Phoenix, Ariz.

Both Jordan and Benjamin said that they'll

find out in a couple weeks where they'll be assigned.

"It's always been my desire to play pro ball," Jordan said, in a phone interview from his hotel room in Tampa. "I wanted to get into it as soon as possible."

Last year, Jordan was drafted out of Canada College in Redwood City, Calif., in the 10th round by the Los Angeles Dodgers, but chose to attend Nebraska.

"Having now seen a little bit of the pros and with my experience at Nebraska...Coach (John) Sanders really treats you on a professional level, I'm more prepared now than what I was

out of junior college just because of what Coach Sanders has taught me," Jordan said.

Benjamin will switch back to the outfield, where he played his first two years at Nebraska before being moved to first base.

Benjamin, in a phone interview from Phoenix, said he likes his chances with Milwaukee. "I definitely was excited," he said. "The (Brewers') outfield's getting up there in age and the Brewers always look for power hitters."

Benjamin, who broke Nebraska's career home-run record this season, said that record gives him confidence in the pros.

"The guy (former Husker Steve Stanicek)

that I broke the records of played in the majors and is now in triple-A ball," he said. "I'm setting a goal that after next year I'd like to get a shot in the majors...I won't stop playing ball until I make it."

Both Jordan and Benjamin said they'll take Sanders' coaching philosophies with them.

"He's a great coach, no matter what anyone says," Benjamin said. "Just the things that he has taught me I will always appreciate."

Nebraska's other two draftees, senior pitcher Dale Kistaitis and junior right fielder Shawn Buchanan have yet to be signed. Kistaitis was drafted by Toronto in the 29th round, while Buchanan was drafted later by Pittsburgh.

Merger could provide more than economic advantages

The recent proposal, er, speculation of the Big Eight and Southwest conferences joining together may have more than just economic advantages

for both of these probation-stricken conferences.

The thought of the alliance was thrown around in early June, after Arkansas, one of Southwest's usual powers in football and men's basketball (the two sports that bring in the most revenue) announced its consideration of joining the Southeastern Conference, that already includes Auburn, LSU, Georgia, Alabama, Florida and Kentucky--to name a few.

The Big Eight's Oklahoma and Oklahoma State were on probation in football last year, as well as Houston and Southern Methodist University of the Southwest Conference.

As a result of these probations, each conference has lost valuable television revenue and the programs on probation subsequently face unwanted rebuilding.

Though premature, the proposal of the two hooking-up would provide

welcome relief for both conferences as well as an opportunity for Nebraska fans to capitalize on some hidden advantages.

Consider the following advantages of the merger:

- First and foremost, the alliance would bring a welcome face back to the Bob Devaney Sports Center. Moe Iba, the only coach to lead Nebraska to the NCAA basketball tournament, now presides over Texas Christian

University of the Southwest Conference. Once again, Iba's roaring voice would fill the upper levels of Devaney as well as the hearts of Husker fans everywhere. Think of it...Husker coach Danny Nee and Iba matching strategies on the court. The game would be a sellout for sure.

- Nebraska fans also would be able to enjoy a counterpart in oddity

See COOPER on 8



Todd Cooper

Teacher lived traveling baseball fantasy

Are you a baseball fan?
Tired of that summer job? Of course.
Like to live out a baseball fantasy?
Of course, who wouldn't?

Can you spare seven to eight weeks and drive throughout North America to see a ballgame in each of the 26 Major League parks?

OK, that might be a bit constricting to an already tight schedule, not to mention a bank account. But, what if this fantasy was yours for about \$20 and a few hours of free time.

You're thinking, maybe this guy's had one too many beers while looking over some stats in the USA Today sports page and somehow got a few numbers mixed up. Wrong...sort of.

Bob Wood, a junior high school teacher and author of "Dodger Dogs to Fenway Franks," lived out such a fantasy in the summer of 1985.

He wrote about it for those of us not fortunate enough to have a job that calls us to duty for only nine months, but gives us a steady paycheck each month.

Wood didn't just compile a travel guide telling the address, average attendance and other the stone-cold, bare essential facts of the various ballparks. Announcers, managers, players and other baseball celebrities could have done that.

Only a fan; only a dreamy, wide-eyed, head in the skies, little kid inside fan, could have given the book its romantic quality that make it a quest, an adventure. The book embodies that same quality that, more than anything, maintains baseball as a major part of our national identity.

Wood brings the adventure home with that essential human touch.

A vacation guide? Yes. But leaving it at that would grossly understate

the book's adventure.

The pages of Wood's book evoke a feeling of having been there. For example, a conversation with a good-natured California Angel's employee creates as much feeling for a baseball fan as Thoreau's "Walden Pond" for the nature lover.

Wood has created the only vacation guide that renders the vacation unnecessary.



Steve Hill

The book made me truly appreciate a free society. Maybe, my patriotism is taking things a bit overboard, but that is the kind of power the book can have over the generally imaginative mind of a baseball fan.

Readers feel frustration in the Kingdom, desert-like heat in Arlington Stadium, nausea in the Astrodome and the charm of Fenway Park.

Being proud of my midwestern roots, my baseball tastes attest to this fact. I was embarrassed of my ignorance about one gem of a ballpark here in the heartland.

A team (and its stadium) I've never paid much attention to is the Milwaukee Brewers in Wisconsin. They might as well be in Utah. They're terribly close in relation to most of the major league teams, yet I never heard much about them or their stadium.

In looking over Wood's report card that precedes the actual quest, I no-

ted that the Brewers' County Stadium received an A+ for atmosphere, edging out my favorite, Royals Stadium.

I was dismayed, angry and hurt. I turned immediately to the section on County Stadium. What could it be? Did they have dancing girls during the seventh-inning stretch?

No dancing girls. But beer, bratwurst and "Roll Out The Barrel" sing-alongs are a winning combination in the category of atmosphere.

I was ashamed of my negligent past. Something this good and I never heard of it. What a sheltered life. My baseball connoisseur status was in jeopardy. Wood had made me a believer.

Wood as he admits, is not a great writer. He's no Thoreau, Dickens or Hemingway, but for baseball fans he has put together one of the most powerful novels ever.

The book has a 1988 copyright and some things have changed. Still, it's worth your while, because as Wood says, "At heart...the game, the ballparks, and the fans who fill the ballparks aren't really much different today than they were in 1937 when ivy came to Wrigley Field."

In replying to Wood's request for a complimentary ticket to a game, the Chicago White Sox replied: "Such a sojourn is a fantasy that exists somewhere in the minds of all baseball fans..."

Now that sojourn can be lived by all baseball fans, relived and stored again on a bookshelf, thanks to Bob Wood.

Hill is a Daily Nebraskan sports reporter and columnist and a senior broadcasting major.

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