

Harrer drafted by Padres, but chooses collegiate ball

By Rongi Yost
Correspondent

Sisters High School's baseball slugger Justin Harrer turned down an opportunity to be drafted in the fourth round by the San Diego Padres. Harrer would have garnered a signing bonus of \$500,000, and had his schooling completely paid. Instead, Justin chose to play collegiate ball for Washington State University (WSU) next year.

Harrer has been involved with the Padres organization for the past several months, particularly the regional scout, Justin Bachman. Harrer had periodic workouts after a game or practice with Bachman here in Sisters, and toward the end of the season, Padres cross-checker (another scout) also started to attend Harrer's workouts. At the end of May, Harrer was informed he would be drafted, but the Padres weren't sure which round.

The Padres' general manager and the scouting director wanted to watch Justin play, and see how he would react against tougher pitching. Justin, along with four college athletes, were invited to a private workout held at the

Padre's stadium, Petco Park, in San Diego, on Sunday, June 8.

Justin left his all-night graduation party early to go home and get some sleep before flying to San Diego on Saturday. On Sunday, the five athletes took part in a special workout that consisted of running a 60, outfield throws to third and home, infield practice, batting practice, and culminated in five live at-bats.

Harrer hit a few out of the park in batting practice, and told *The Nugget* that the biggest thing he noticed was when the ball flew off the bat, instead of seeing trees and blue sky, he saw a massive scoreboard and a huge stadium.

After batting practice, the athletes were each given five live at-bats against the Padres pitchers, who all threw the ball up to 96 mph.

Justin struck out one-two-three, in his first at-bat. But, in his next attempt, he hit a line drive up the middle against an 85-mph slider. He also blasted a shot that went all the way to the wall off a lefty who brought the ball at 95 mph. Harrer finished the live at-bats 2-for-4, with a walk.

"The workout was amazing," said Harrer. "It was a huge honor to be invited and an amazing opportunity to work out in front of the entire Padres organization. It was pretty wild. I had an amazing workout, but I was very nervous and full of adrenaline. One college guy from Santa Clara told me, 'You're good, man. Just relax and don't forget to breathe.' That was very helpful and calmed me down a little bit."

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Justin and his parents, who flew down with him, talked with the members of the Padres organization, including the owners, after the workout, but no official offer was made at the time. Harrer flew home on Sunday evening, and the very next day



PHOTO PROVIDED

Justin Harrer visited San Diego with parents Janice and Tom.

the Padres flew Bachman to Oregon to meet with Justin.

Justin was in the middle of his graduation party when Bachman showed up at their home.

"It was pretty unique to have a Padres scout at my grad party," said Harrer. "It's something I will never forget."

Bachman again told Harrer that the Padres wanted to invest in him, that he would be drafted, but they still weren't sure what round. He added that when an offer was made he would need to be ready with his decision.

Justin told *The Nugget* that the MLB draft wasn't something he really understood until he got involved in the process, and explained one piece of the process.

"An organization has to sign their picks in the first 10 rounds of the draft because each round has slot money attached to it. If they don't sign those rounds they lose," said Harrer.

"On Tuesday, rounds three to 10 were drafted, and the general manager, the director of scouting, and the owners

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