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Matador Becomes a Chicago Cub

Rebecca Eckland



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Chicago Cubs Center Fielder Brett Jackson remembers watching Giants games with his dad while growing up, well, watching half a game anyway. "I'd rather play than watch," he said.

His dad, Peter Jackson, explained that his son had a specific goal. "When he was a tyke of six years old, he had a plastic bat in hand and said that he wanted to be a 'baseball man.'"

Instead of growing out of his dream like most kids do, Jackson grew into his.

Jackson's baseball career began at the age of four when he began to play for the Orinda Baseball Association. It wasn't long until baseball became Jackson's sole athletic focus. Once an avid snow-skier, hiker, and water-skier, he sacrificed summers with his family to attend baseball camps. "Every summer since he was 14, he's yet to have a summer at home," his dad recalled.

Brett's dedication earned him a position on Miramonte High School's baseball team, where he earned DFAL First-Team All-League honors his junior and senior years.

At the age of 16, UC Berkeley recruited him to play for the Golden Bears. At Cal, he studied sociology and art, while achieving All-American status on the field.

"It's hard to see how you size up in the big baseball world when you are in high school. Playing at Cal and [for] summer college leagues gave me confidence I could work hard and maybe play at the highest level," Brett said.

After Brett's junior year at Cal, he accomplished his lifelong dream of playing Major League Baseball. He was drafted in the first round, 31st overall, by the Chicago Cubs in 2009.

Jackson was called up from the minors to make his debut for the Cubs on August 5.

Playing in the Majors is different than Brett had imagined it. Growing up, he thought players just showed up

to play at game time. Instead, Jackson arrives hours before the first pitch to watch video.

"This is a 9-10 hour a day job," he explained, "Sometimes, it feels like a 24/7 job, seven months a year!"

However, Jackson enjoys the extra time to develop his skills. "The combination of coaching and technology... [has] allowed for the ability to fine-tune areas of my game that I never had before," he said, "I simply want to take full advantage of that."

Yet, the strength of competition has been a challenge for Jackson. He has struggled at the plate, accumulating 31 strikeouts for 61 bats, while batting .197 before last weekend's series.

"[My] biggest adjustment has been the additional speed of the game--the pitchers are the best in the world," he said.

Brett found a rhythm last weekend against the Colorado Rockies though. He notched two home runs in as many games, including a bomb that sparked a winning rally for the Cubs on Friday.



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Brett and his family in 2009

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