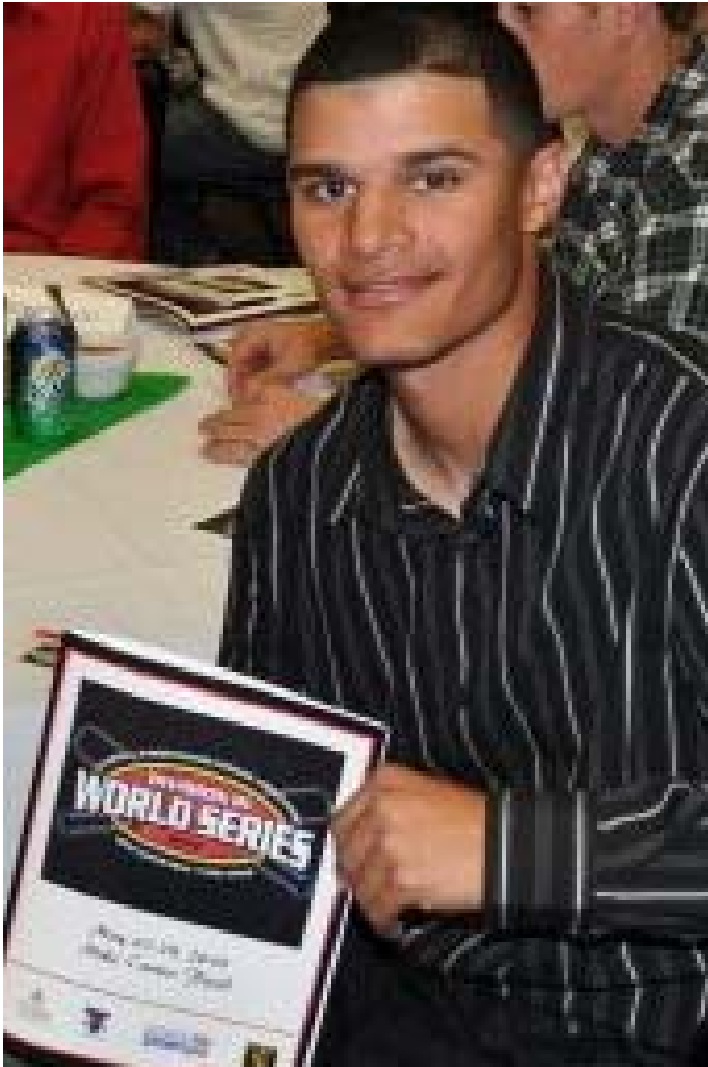


The Beacon News

Rivera calls opportunity with Cubs 'a blessing'

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It is a moment East Aurora baseball coach Jorge Trejo says he will never forget.

His star player, Carlos Rivera, will probably remember it forever as well.

Sitting at Rivera's home late Friday afternoon monitoring the Major League Baseball draft on the internet, a small group including Rivera, his coach and family exploded with a loud cheer when they learned the young outfielder had been drafted in the 48th round by the Chicago Cubs.

Moments later Rivera's phone rang with a call from a Cubs scout confirming the team's pick. A few seconds after that, Rivera was smiling ear to ear, tears of joy beginning to stream down his face.

"As a person, you are just real happy and proud," said Trejo, who coached Rivera

at East for four years. "As a coach, it was a moment that makes you want to do it even more."

Rivera was a four-year starter at East and a four-time member of The Beacon News All-Area Baseball Team. This past season he hit .411 with 21 stolen bases batting third for the Tomcats.

"This is such a blessing," said Rivera. "I just want to set higher goals and continue to reach each one of them.

"When I saw the newspaper, all I could focus on was the fact that it said that the Cubs drafted a Tomcat. I am so proud that I came from East Aurora, and I am honored to represent the Tomcats as I go forward in life."

Trejo said Rivera also drew major interest from the Florida Marlins, Tampa Bay Devil Rays and Kansas City Royals.

Rivera now has until Aug. 15 to either sign a minor-league contract with the Cubs or decide to go to college.

"This is a major life decision that I have to make and I am just going to take my time, pray, and put everything into perspective," said Rivera.

In the meantime, he will be honored at East's next Board of Education meeting.

Trejo said that Rivera, who gave up basketball and football after his freshman season to concentrate on baseball, earned the draft pick.

"He worked so hard," Trejo said. "He is really an inspiration to everyone. He really shows what hard work can accomplish. He always played the game as hard as he could.

"And, as a person, you are happy to see him do it because he is a good guy. Everyone liked him. Administrators, teammates, teachers - he had all their respect."

When asked if, in his opinion, Rivera is the best player in East's history, Trejo had a quick response.

"Hands down," he said.