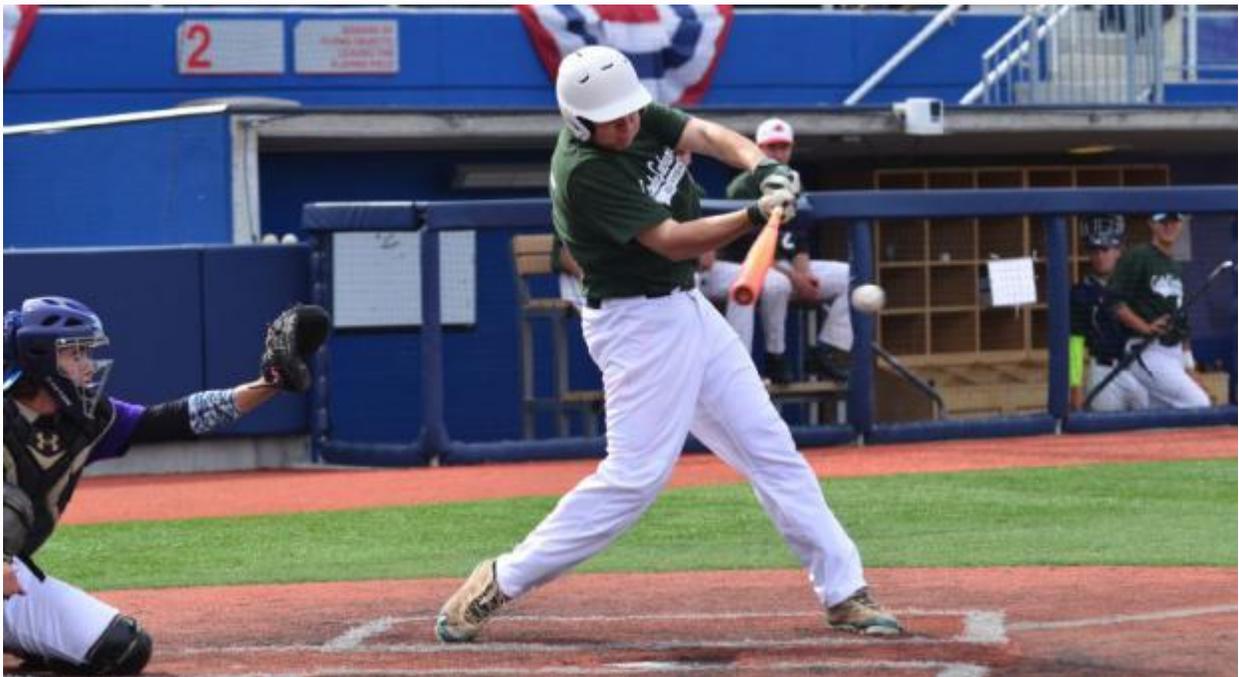




# Upperclassmen get scouted at Chicagoland Classic



*Jordan Kaplan takes a swing in the game against the Mid-Suburban League.*

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4:58 pm CDT June 22, 2015

Some of the Central Suburban League's best hitters found themselves in a foreign situation on Friday, June 19, and Saturday, June 20.

When they stepped into the batter's box at the Chicagoland Classic, they looked out and saw a collection of top pitchers from the West Suburban Conference on June 19 and



the Mid-Suburban League on June 20. Beyond the different pitchers and the navy blue hitter's backdrop at UIC's Curtis Granderson Stadium loomed the Chicago skyline – one of the most picturesque backgrounds of any Chicago sports stadium.

But it wasn't the pitchers, the college stadium or the skyline that was the most intimidating aspect for the collection of juniors- and seniors-to-be. It was what was behind home plate.

Behind them, on June 20, was a group of about 40-50 college scouts and coaches. They were there to evaluate each player at the Chicagoland Classic, where one strong performance at the showcase could be a crucial first impression that leads to a college scholarship.

"It does [feel] a little intimidating, coming in here with a bunch of other kids and knowing you're only going to get a few chances and everyone's watching," Highland Park outfielder Justin Mills said.

New Trier outfielder Michael Hurley, Glenbrook South catcher Billy Loggarakis and Glenbrook North outfielder Jackson Potrue all agreed.

"I think the first at-bat [was a little intimidating]," Potrue said. "But then after a while you realize it's just about your approach and how hard you play and the rest will take care of itself."

Hurley added: "I think you've just got to relax and stick with how you play."

That was Hurley's mentality when he came to bat in the bottom of the fourth and eighth innings. In the fourth, he was patient and got ahead 2-1 in the count. Then, he pounded a fastball into the gap in right-center.



It was the perfect hit for the showcase setting, Hurley said afterward. He not only had a solid approach at the plate, showed good patience and an ability to drive the ball the opposite way, his speed was on display as he flew around the bases and motored into third base for a stand-up triple.

"There's definitely a weight that comes off of your shoulders," Hurley, who was 3-for-4 at the showcase, said of the triple. "It feels good."

Later, Hurley drove in two runs with his double down the third-base line. He saw a lot of pitches in that situation, first drawing a walk -- batters continue to hit at the Chicagoland Classic when they walk, with one of their teammates running for them at first -- and then working the count full before smacking the ball down the line.

"It was a 3-2 count, so I really had to widen out and attack the plate," said Hurley, who was joined by New Trier infielder Clay Czyzynski and injured catcher Max Rosenthal (high-ankle sprain) at the showcase. "He gave me an inside fastball, so I turned on it. You've just got to have an easy approach just like you do every other game."

Loggarakis was 0-for-3 at the Chicagoland Classic when he stepped into the batter's box in the bottom of the seventh.

The senior had showed an ability to block breaking balls in the dirt and throw out runners with accurate throws earlier in the game, but Loggarakis, like Hurley did in the fourth, hit an extra-base hit into the gap.

On a 1-0 count Loggarakis got a fastball on the inner half, which is his power zone, and sent it into left center for a double.

"When I got it, I lit it up," Loggarakis said, of the inside fastball. "That was awesome, especially in front of all of these scouts. It was a lot of fun."



An aspect of Loggarakis' responsibility at the Chicagoland Classic was to handle the pitching staff, too. The collection of scouts, several of which had radar guns, was likely an intimidating backdrop for each pitcher – which included Glenbrook North's Nathan Mirochnick and Michael Oh, and Highland Park's Noah Stern.

Knowing that, Loggarakis – who was joined at the Chicagoland Classic by Glenbrook South's Justin Machado and Cam Pauly – tried to empower the pitchers he caught and keep them within themselves.

"I told them, 'Don't worry. Just showcase whatever you've got,'" he said. "If they want to shake me off, they can do it. Whatever they want to show, go for it. I said, 'Just block [the scouts] out. Just do yourself and you'll be fine.'"

Stern pitched a scoreless third inning on June 20, but the MSL was able to score runs off of Mirochnick and Oh in the game's middle innings.

The CSL rallied for a 5-4 victory, however. Hurley's two-run double down the line was a big reason, but so too were hits by Potrue and Glenbrook North's Jordan Kaplan. Kaplan got on base in the bottom of the eighth with a sharply-hit single and he was driven in by Hurley.

Potrue, meanwhile, drew two walks in the bottom of the ninth -- and then stung a single toward the gap. Potrue tried to stretch it into a double, but was thrown out at second. A runner scored, however, and the CSL went on to win the 10-inning game.

For Potrue, who went 2-5 over the two-day showcase, that type of at-bat was a satisfying way to end the Chicagoland Classic.

"That felt good, just being able to see a bunch of pitches," Potrue said. "I kind of knew what to expect from that guy, so I put good wood on it."