



MENDOCINO-LAKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 3, 2017

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THREE EAGLES BALLPLAYERS SIGN NATIONAL LETTERS OF INTENT

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On Monday, three more Mendocino College student-athletes signed National Letters of Intent (NLIs) to continue their college education and sports careers at four-year colleges. This group of signees, Jeff Piver, David Mansell and Nic Vargas, were sophomores on this year's Eagles baseball team:

In signing, each student-athlete formally agreed to enroll at his college of choice and play for that university's baseball team.

Piver and Mansell both will be continue their studies and play baseball here in Northern California at San Francisco State University, an NCAA Division II college. The SF State Gators are a member of the California Collegiate Athletic Association (CCAA).

Vargas will be heading to Valley City North Dakota, home of Valley City State University, an NAIA college. The VCSU Vikings are member of the North Star Athletic Association (NSAA). Valley City is about 65 miles west of Fargo, ND, on the border with Minnesota.

Each student-athlete will receive an athletic scholarship to help pay their costs as students at the universities.

The three have chosen different courses of study leading to Bachelor's Degrees. Piver wants to pursue a degree in communications, Mansell in business and Vargas in English.

Each of the three student-athletes graduated from and played baseball for local area high schools: Piver is a former Ukiah High Wildcat, Mansell a former Clear Lake High Cardinal and Vargas a former Kelseyville High Knight.

The three played multiple positions in high school but focused on one position in college. Piver and Vargas were pitchers for the Eagles, while Mansell played center field. They will play those positions at their four-year colleges.

Their signings can be viewed as their reward for their hard work and perseverance in the face of adversity.

Piver graduated from high school in 2013. He enrolled in an out-of-area community college, but injured a hand and did not play ball. He took a year off before enrolling at Mendocino College last year. He missed most of the first half of the 2016 baseball season with another injury, ultimately making only six appearances as a starter.

Mansell, who graduated in 2014, also suffered injuries which limited his playing time in his 2015 freshman season



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at Mendocino. Primed to play and start for the Eagles in 2016, he sustained a serious shoulder injury eight games into the season trying to make a diving catch, ending his season. Fortunately, he was granted redshirt status and allowed to play this season.

Vargas, who graduated in 2015, didn't have the injury problems of his other two teammates, but had to assume the role of a reliever in short-relief assignments last season, laboring through 16 appearances.

This season, all three players played a full season and had fine years, contributing to the Eagles' 18-game win season, the third best total for the program in the past decade and a half-plus of play. Their fine efforts attracted the attention of several four-year college baseball programs and resulted in multiple recruitment offers from those colleges.

Mansell played in all 40 of the Eagles' games and most of the innings. He led the team in home runs with 8, (second in the conference). He had 24 walks and was hit by pitches 8 times. He tied in doubles with 12 and second in total bases with 76. He played stellar defense in center field.

Piver, the team's No. 1 starter, started 13 games and made one relief appearance. He led the team in innings pitched with 78.2. He was the team leader in wins with 7 (No. 3 in conference). He averaged just under 7 strikeouts per 9 innings pitched for a total of 61 for the season (No. 3 in conference). He walked only 8 batters. His ERA was 2.97 (No. 5 in conference).

Vargas was the team's No. 2 starter this season, making 12 appearances, 11 of them starts. He won three games. He was the Eagles' starter in several games the Eagles won in later innings. Vargas limiting the opponent until the Eagles got and held the lead. He pitched 63.2 innings, with just under 5 strikeouts per 9 innings pitched. He had an ERA of 3.82. He showed the ability to pitch out of tough situations and squelch potential rallies by opponents.

Both pitchers could be depended on to go several innings per start, often going at least 5 or 6 innings, limiting the opponents scoring and giving the Eagles a good opportunity to win the games.

Having multiple offers from four-year colleges, each of the three student-athletes explained how he settled on his final choice.

Piver didn't decide to on his choice of college until near the end of the Eagles' baseball season. "I wasn't sure where I wanted to go. San Francisco offered the best academic and athletic situation for me. It was closer to home. My parents could come see me play. It was far enough away but not too far. They (SF State) play in a great conference."

The California Collegiate Athletic Association includes 12 California State Universities and UC San Diego, from Humboldt State University in the north to UC San Diego in the south.

Mansell explained that he and Piver decided about the same time. "He was kind of leaning to San Marcos. I got a call from the San Francisco coach. He (Piver) had already got an offer from them. That was kind of the deciding factor, both of us being able to go there together, live together and play ball together in the best D-II conference in



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the nation. It was hard to pass up that opportunity. It's pretty cool."

Vargas had multiple offers from schools in the North Star Athletic Association. "There were four or five schools that contacted me in that league. This was the best offer. It includes a 70 percent scholarship, plus free housing. I haven't been there yet, but I've talked to a couple of California people that are on the team. They had good things to say. I'm going to go visit in June."

Asked to reflect on their time at Mendocino College, the three student-athletes all agree that this year was, by far, their best, due in no small part to the team's success.

Commented, Mansell, "This whole season was one good memory, going from 7 wins to 18. It was my first whole season." Piver added, "The whole season was a complete turnaround."

All three players agree that beating the conference-champion College of Marin Mariners 9-0 on Marin's field was one particularly nice memory of the season.

Vargas appreciated the opportunity to be a starting pitcher this year. "It's kind of what my body is used to. Whenever I pitch, I need a certain amount of days off no matter how many pitches I throw. The six or seven days off between starts made a big difference for me this season. The coaching staff really helped me this year in the fall and the spring to get from where I was last year to this year."

All three agreed that the overall team experience was great this season. Piver commented, "It was a lot better than last year. It was good to be a part of this team. It was a good team culture. Every aspect of being at Mendocino College was better. It made it enjoyable to be here.

"We kind of made some noise in the conference and competed in every game. Every team came in knowing that they were going to have to earn a win from us. Things are going to change here."

Mansell concurred. "I think this year is going to change how things are going to be in the future. I think in the next three to five years they (Eagles) are going to be in the playoffs. People are going to want to come here."

Piver added, "It's a great coaching staff."

The staff had some things to say about players and their signings.

Eagles head coach Conor Bird explained, "Of course you want to win games. But the goal at this level is to help the players move on. They're getting the opportunity to do that. They're going to some pretty good schools. They got good scholarships. So I'm sure their families are happy, too.

"I talked to a lot of schools about these players. They had multiple (scholarship) offers. SF State spent a lot of time recruiting them. So I think that worked out to their advantage."

Assistant coach Ryan Burke complimented the three sophomores. "It was the goal of the coaching staff to get our



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sophomores a chance to play at the next level. Coming in (as a new coaching staff this year) those were our three sophomore leaders. They helped us out getting the team going. They set a standard for what college players should be like to move on to the next level.

“They showed up early, worked hard, lifted weights. They competed in practice and in games. So it was easy for us to talk to (recruiting) coaches about them and tell them how good they are and how they can go into those programs and do really well.

“They got athletic scholarships which are rare for baseball, compared to basketball and football. A full-ride scholarship is almost nonexistent in baseball. So for them to earn athletic scholarships is really incredible.

“Those schools identified these kids as impact players who can come in and start next year. Piver and Vargas will be starting pitchers and Mansell will probably be assigned to the outfield and hit in the middle of the order.

“Jeff Piver was probably the best pitcher in our conference. He can step in and start in their conference right away. He could throw game one for them next year. He’s a top-of-the-line guy at that level.

“David Mansell is as athletic as it gets. He runs faster than almost anyone on the field. Hits the ball farther than anyone. He’s got a decent arm. With the adjustments he’ll make there with his offensive approach, his average will come up. He’ll hit home runs, too.

“Nic Vargas is a left-handed pitcher who throws a lot of strikes and mixes speeds. He will be a solid starter for his team.

“These three guys are players who will make impacts on their teams and help their teams win.

“That’s our goal as a staff, to get our players to the four-year level and, hopefully, if they can earn academic or athletic scholarships, that’s even better.”