

## Scottsdale Chaparral's Ike Davis - Hit or pitch? Why not both?

by **Richard Obert** Aug. 5, 2003 *Keeping track of high school sports and college recruiting*

**Chaparral High School junior Ike Davis** is going to play in Taiwan this month because he is so good at doing both. Davis is one of 18 players to make the U.S. youth baseball team that is going to the world championships. But there will be a time when Davis will have to give up one for the other.

"I had a college coach in the fall ask about him," 30-year **Chaparral baseball coach Jerry Dawson** said. "I spent two minutes on what a great pitcher he is. He hits 85 miles an hour. He's got a good move to first. Three pitches he can throw for a strike." There was silence to the point where I said, 'You still there?' He said, 'Yeah, but I didn't know he pitched. I just thought he was a hitter.' "

Then **Dawson** spent another couple minutes boasting about **Davis'** bat. Last spring, as a 6-foot-3, 180-pound junior, the left-handed **Davis** went 9-0 with three saves on the mound. As a first baseman, at the plate, **Davis** led the Class 4A championship Firebirds with a .569 batting average.

"That's down the line in my baseball career to make a decision (on what to play)," **Davis** said. "Obviously, I can do both in high school. And probably in college."

But before he graduates from Chaparral, **Davis**, who still has two years of high school eligibility left, will have a bigger decision to make: Go pro or play college baseball? That's for another day. Right now, **Davis** is glowing in the baseball spotlight in a summer of sweet success.

There were 64 youth teams (no older than 16) out of Jupiter, Fla., and another 64 out of Tucson. From that, 45 players were brought together in Southern California to whittle the field to 18 players who will go to Taiwan for international competition. **Davis** is the only Arizona high school 16-year-old to make the elite squad. He was the only Arizona kid among the 45 invited to Los Angeles.

Not even **former Chaparral star Paul Konerko, who's with the Chicago White Sox**, made a team of such prestige the summer before his junior year.

In a series of exhibition games, **Davis** hit better than .500. He had two doubles and two RBIs in a victory over a top 18-and-younger team from Southern California last week.

"The first day, I was a little stunned at how everyone pitched in the high 80s and low 90s," **Davis** said. "You've got to get your bat quicker. After that, I got used to it."

He closed two games for his team and recorded two saves, not giving up a hit. In one inning of one game, **Davis** struck out two. The U.S. youth team played Cuba on Sunday. It played host Taiwan on Monday and meets South Korea today. **Davis** could be in Taiwan through Aug. 17, depending on whether the United States reaches the medal round. The qualifying rounds begin Saturday.

"It's a good feeling being one of the top 18 players who are 16-year-olds in the country," **Davis** said. "It gives you pride. Hopefully, we can win the gold medal. That's the next step."

**Davis** is a pretty good basketball player, but his talents in baseball could keep him playing the sport year-round now. **His father, Ron Davis, was a major-league closer**. He's not pushy, just supportive.

"He says do what you feel best," **Ike** said.

Ike made the all-tournament team playing in the Sun Belt Tournament in June, playing against top competition from Texas, Georgia, California, Florida and Maryland. He tore it up in the Connie Mack League, playing for former major-league player Kenny Phelps.

"It built confidence," **Davis** said.

**Dawson** said that it will be up to **Davis** how far he can take a baseball career. He's got seemingly unlimited tools, but work ethic is sometimes a question.

"He's got good ability, good size," **Dawson** said. "He needs to fill out and get stronger. And he needs to work harder at it. He'd be the first one to tell you that. I think a lot of it is down the road, whether he'll be a pitcher or a hitter. That's the real interesting problem. It's a good problem."