

Suburban Journals

Print Page

Last modified: Tuesday, August 3, 2010 3:06 PM CDT



PHOTO COURTESY STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Priory graduate Dan Sandbrink, shown above pitching for Stanford, excelled for the Wildwood Dodgers Metro Collegiate team this summer. He was 7-0 with a 1.26 ERA for the Dodgers

METRO COLLEGIATE BASEBALL: Sandbrink helps Wildwood post solid 20-9 season

By [Brett Auten](#)

After two summers of being away from family and friends, Dan Sandbrink decided to return to St. Louis.

And the Wildwood Metro Collegiate baseball team is so glad that he did.

Sandbrink, a 2007 Priory graduate, will begin his senior season at Stanford in a few weeks. In 2008, he spent the summer playing in Alaska and last year he played in the Cape Cod League.

"I was looking to spend some time at home and looking for more of an opportunity to play," Sandbrink said. "I'd heard some different things about (the Metro Collegians league) and it sounded perfect for what I was looking for."

Sandbrink came in this summer and simply dominated, going 7-0 with a 1.26 ERA for the Dodgers. He struck out 57 while only walking 10 and never allowed more than three earned runs in an outing.

"I've known him since he was 10, 12 years old," Wildwood coach Gus Lombardo said.

"We were lucky to have him."

Sandbrink, who played a key role in helping Wildwood post a 20-9 record this summer, doesn't have overpowering stuff, keeping his fastball in the 88-89 miles per hour range. But he loves to pound the strike zone and he took advantage of the Metro Collegian's policy of wood bats only.

"If you make them swing, the strikeouts will come," Sandbrink said. "Plus, the wood bats help. With the metal, if you get to a 2-1, 3-1 count, you're reluctant to force contact to get you out of a bad spot."

Also, among Sandbrink's arsenal is a pitch that defies description.

"It's a nasty sinker or a hard slider," Lombardo said. "It is hard to describe."

Sandbrink's coaches at Stanford simply call it, "The Funk."

"I tried to teach some of the other guys to throw it. It's just a weird pitch," Sandbrink said. "It has a funny grip and I used it one time just playing around. Now it's stuck."

The 21-year-old from Chesterfield has been playing baseball for as long as he can remember from church leagues to playing select baseball as a sixth grader. He began pitching as soon as he could and also excelled behind the plate as well as second and third base.

At Priory, he was a two-sport standout in both baseball and football and on the diamond was twice named first-team all state and all-ABC League. He was a finalist for the 2007 St. Louis Rising Star Award when he finished his senior season with a 1.94 ERA and 35 strikeouts in 36 innings.

Sandbrink had an outstanding rookie college season, going 2-1 with one save and a 2.81 ERA in 20 games, including six starts. He ranked second on the club in ERA while he tied for third in appearances. Without his rough April 11 start at Oregon State (5 earned runs, 0.2 innings), forged a 2.05 ERA (13 earned runs in 57 innings pitched) over his other 19 outings and yielded fewer hits than innings pitched while holding opposing batters to a .257 average.

"Oregon State was the defending national champions," Sandbrink said. "They hit two home runs off of me in the first inning. That was an eye opener."

He ranked second in the Pac-10 by picking off five base runners, while he led the league with three during conference play. He saved his best pitching for a dominant postseason, as he made two starts and was 1-0 with a 1.38 ERA over 13.0 innings, allowing just two earned runs and a .170 average against. He took the ball for the first of two elimination games against Pepperdine to determine the Regional champion and responded with his first career complete game in a 13-1 win. He again faced an elimination situation at the College World Series in a start versus Miami. Sandbrink limited the Hurricanes to one run on two hits over four innings as Stanford won 8-3 to remain alive in Omaha.

"Pitching in those elimination games gave me some great experience," Sandbrink said. "I really worked my way from mid-relief to in the rotation."

Sandbrink had an up-and-down sophomore campaign, finishing with a 1-1 record and a 7.09 ERA over 33.0 innings over 19 games, including five starts. He yielded seven earned runs in just 3.2 innings over his first two appearances but bounced back to forge a 1.59 ERA over 11.2 innings, allowing just two runs over his next five outings, a stretch in which he allowed just seven hits while striking out 12.

"I didn't have the best year," Sandbrink said. "I got an opening weekend start but after that I was moved to the bullpen."

Last spring, Sandbrink returned to form, going 2-2 with a 4.87 ERA in 44 innings and three starts.

"I pitched well and had some good outings," Sandbrink said. "It was more like my freshman year."

Sandbrink, the son of Joseph and Bernadette Sandbrink, is majoring in economics. He says Stanford's academic reputation lives up to its billing.

"It's pretty tough. A lot of us have a good work ethic and coach kind of leaves it up to us," Sandbrink said. "It's not easy. Our school goes late in the year and at the end of the season you see guys taking final exams in hotels on the road."

Playing in the Pac-10 and facing the best of the best in Alaska and Cape Cod has Sandbrink at least thinking about the possibility of getting drafted by a Major League club.

"That's definitely a goal. Hopefully I'll make it," he said. "But you try not to think about it. You can't control it. All you can do is try to win and the rest will take care of itself."

METRO COLLEGIATE LEAGUE

FINAL STANDINGS

Division 1 W L

Ballwin Bandits 21 8

Wildwood Dodgers 20 9

St. Charles Mules 16 14

Alton Indians 15 10

Kirkwood Kats 11 15

Bridgeton Knights 10 16

Clayton Wasps 7 17

University City Lions 7 18