



Stanford's Stephen Piscotty Dreamed Of Playing For Stanford

By **Mike Lemaire**
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STANFORD, Calif.—A three-time first team all-East Bay Athletic League pick coming out of Amador Valley High in Pleasanton, Calif., Stanford junior third baseman Stephen Piscotty wasn't lacking for options on where to take his game.

In addition to being selected by the Dodgers in the 45th round of the 2009 draft, Piscotty had plenty of offers from some of the best college programs across the West Coast. But when it came time to make a decision, there was little doubt which option Piscotty was going to choose. His uncle—a Stanford alumnus—made sure of that.

"It was actually a tough decision and I had narrowed it down to California, Oregon, and Stanford," Piscotty said. "But since I was probably 5, my uncle has been bringing me to Stanford baseball games for my birthday. So it was kind of like a dream come true for me to get the chance to play here, and I am very happy to be here."

The Stanford faithful and Piscotty's coach, Mark Marquess, are pretty happy he ended up on The Farm as well, because since Piscotty stepped on campus, he has been one of the most versatile defenders and consistent offensive performers in the Cardinal lineup.

A shortstop throughout high school, the rangy Piscotty projected as a third baseman in college. But he was blocked at the position as a freshman because the Cardinal already had a sensational defensive shortstop in junior Jake Schlander, and Marquess was set on using the highly touted Kenny Diekroeger at the hot corner.

Marquess also knew that Piscotty's bat was too special to keep out of the lineup. So he planned to start Piscotty in left field, something the freshman didn't realize until he saw his name penciled in at the position on the Opening Day lineup card. He hasn't come back out of the lineup since.

"He never even told me, I just saw it in the lineup sheet before the game and said, 'Well, I better go get my glove,' " Piscotty said. "So it was a little bit of a surprise on game day, but I was just happy to be in the lineup and it didn't matter where."

Halfway through the season, with the team looking for a place to put the red-hot Ben Clowe in the lineup and needing a first baseman, Marquess knew exactly whom to approach about the switch.

"It is very difficult to bounce around the diamond like that, and not many guys can do it,"



Marquess said. "But he is so athletic and competitive, he was the logical choice. Now he wants to pitch, and you know he throws about 93 mph, so if I could cut him in half I would use him a lot of different places. I ask him to play anywhere and he will play there."

After the season, Schlander left school to play professionally and Diekroeger slid over to shortstop, paving the way for Piscotty's return to third base, where he played all 57 games last season. But no matter where he plays defensively, the constant has been his offense. After hitting .326/.387/.454 with a team-leading 45 runs as freshman, Piscotty came back last year and improved on the numbers, hitting a team-best .364/.423/.471.

After a blistering summer when he won the Cape Cod League batting title, Piscotty has picked up where he left off this season for the second-ranked Cardinal. Hitting in the middle of one of the most potent lineups in the country, Piscotty is batting .370/.446/.685 with three home runs, which is as many as he hit all of last season. It seems likely he will pass his previous career total (seven) in this season alone. He also has 21 RBIs, four doubles, two triples and a 5-3 walk-strikeout mark.

Already a disciplined hitter who is hard to strike out and can hit to all fields, now that Piscotty is flashing power, few players in college baseball can match his offensive ability. The question for scouts now is whether he has the defensive ability to stick at third base.

Marquess said Piscotty has enough athleticism and hitting ability to move to a corner outfield spot, but Piscotty is convinced he can stay at third, where he made 17 errors last season and already had four this season. Piscotty chalks up most of his errors to correctable throwing mistakes that he expects to iron out with experience. Professional scouts aren't so sure.

"He probably either ends up in right field or first base," one NL area scout said. "You send him out as a third baseman until he absolutely proves he can't do it. Do I think he's going to end up playing third? No, I don't. But that doesn't mean he can't."

Piscotty isn't worried about his pro future right now. He has yet to reach the College World Series in his first two seasons, and as part of one of the most talented and well-rounded teams in the country this season, his only focus is getting to Omaha this season.

"Personally this is probably the best team I have ever played on," Piscotty said. "So I am completely, 100 percent focused on this season. I want to see how far we can go and take this straight to Omaha and win it. It has been an unbelievable experience so far and now I just want to see this through."

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