

# Piscotty living a baseball dream

Cardinals first supplemental round pick is beginning a promising pro career with the River Bandits

For most of Stephen Piscotty's life, summers have been about baseball.

Piscotty and his two younger brothers had so much fun playing baseball in the backyard that Piscotty knew he wanted to keep playing as long as he could.

"I always had that dream of playing professionally but never knew if it would pan out," said the River Bandits third baseman. "Luckily it did, so it's a dream come true. It's just awesome to be here."

The Quad Cities is the first professional stop for Piscotty after he was drafted 36th overall by the St. Louis Cardinals in the first supplemental round of the June First-Year Player Draft.

Following three college seasons as a starter for the Stanford Cardinal and impressive showings in two summer leagues, Piscotty is beginning what he and the Cardinals hope will be a climb toward a major league career.

A native of Pleasanton, Calif., near the Bay Area, Piscotty grew up watching the Oakland Athletics. So it was a highlight for him to meet former Athletics slugger and current Cardinals hitting coach Mark McGwire when Piscotty went to St. Louis in mid-June to sign his first professional contract.

At Busch Stadium that weekend, the Cardinals hosted Piscotty and his family for two games, introduced him to club personnel and had him take batting practice on the field.

In the weeks following that "awesome" two-day trip, the Cardinals have continued to impress Piscotty in his minor league experience.

"I feel very well taken care of – in the locker room, going on the road – everything is just very well done," he said. "I had heard that the Cardinals did it the right way...and I can say that's the truth."

## **Minor adjustments for major success**

After three weeks in a River Bandits uniform, Piscotty said he was comfortably back to playing baseball. While he admitted to being nervous in his debut June 28 at Modern Woodmen Park, he quickly began to perform on the field, hitting five doubles in his first home stand and adding his first home run July 4.

With more emphasis on player development, the minor leagues have forced Piscotty to be flexible enough to work on whatever area of the game is on the schedule for a given day.

"It's kind of getting used to the routine of not having a routine," Piscotty said. "I'm putting a lot of hard work in, and I'm really happy. I feel like I'm getting better here."

The biggest challenge of this summer is one Piscotty expected when he came to the Midwest League.

"Getting used to the living style and the long bus trips...it's not as bad as I thought it was going to be, but it is a grind," he said. "It's definitely one thing that's taken a little getting used to."

## **Cardinal teammates reunite for Cardinals affiliate**

When Piscotty became the newest River Bandit, he joined former college teammate Colin Walsh in the middle of one of the most productive lineups in the first three months of the Midwest League season.

Two years ago, the college freshman Piscotty and junior Walsh were the only two players to start all 56 games for the Cardinal. That season Piscotty out-hit Walsh (.326 to .317), while the latter had more home runs (seven to four) and RBIs (41).

"As a freshman, he just raked. He's always just hit wherever he's been," Walsh said of Piscotty. "He was more mature...you couldn't tell he was a freshman."

Walsh was the Cardinals' 13th-round pick in 2010, and he knew Piscotty could be joining him soon in the professional ranks.

"I didn't know exactly how good he could or was going to be, but I knew he had a chance to be something special," Walsh said. "It's not a surprise to me that he was a first-rounder."

Piscotty called Walsh after being drafted in June, and the third-year River Bandits veteran was able to help him get settled in with a place to live and become familiar with life at the ballpark and in the Quad Cities.

“He’s been a huge help, and I’m really thankful that he’s been here,” Piscotty said of Walsh. “He’s a really good blessing, and it was kind of lucky that he was on this team.”

The feeling was mutual, as Walsh knew the club was gaining a solid teammate in Piscotty.

“I don’t think I’ve ever met someone that has a bad thing to say about him,” Walsh said.

### **Developing talent**

Piscotty, a former pitching and hitting standout, has been a good second-half addition to the River Bandits and the Cardinals organization, said first-year manager Luis Aguayo.

“Our job is to accustom him to professional baseball,” said Aguayo, a former major league infielder with Philadelphia, New York and Cleveland. “He’s been doing well.”

Although he would like to have Piscotty play every day, Aguayo said his job is to get Piscotty through the season healthy and strong.

“My thought is to let him go, let him play, correct maybe a few things that we need to work on,” Aguayo said.

Aguayo is hoping Piscotty will be able to go to the instructional league this fall, which Aguayo said would be the perfect time for Piscotty to get a full introduction to all of the Cardinals organization’s fundamentals and philosophies.

Piscotty already knows areas he wants to improve, including playing better defense at third base and driving more balls as a hitter. Those improvements will come from putting more work into his game, just like he did in the back yard for years with his brothers, one of whom is in high school and the other who is pitching at Duke University.

“I give a lot of credit to my brothers for my baseball,” Piscotty said. “I feel like I got a lot of work in, and even if it was just playing with a tennis ball and a little whiffle ball bat.”