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## Davis Diaz on the way to Vanderbilt or the Major Leagues

By Jon Kingdon



Davis Diaz in 2018 Photo Gint Federas

A few years ago, there was a baseball movie starring Kevin Costner called "For the Love of the Game." It's a title that could also be applied to recent Acalanes graduate Davis Diaz and his relationship to baseball.

Even though Diaz is only 18, it could not be called a short-term relationship. "I started playing T-ball at the age of 3, though my parents had to lie about my age," Diaz said. "I went on to play with a Pleasant Hill team called the Hawks and then with the Lamorinda Travel team and I grew up with them along with playing at Acalanes."

Though Diaz grew up in Pittsburgh, he started going to school in Walnut Creek and eventually made his way to Acalanes. Growing up for Diaz, it was mostly baseball but "I pretty much played everything with a ball."

It was Diaz's father, Adrian, that imbued in Davis the love of the game. "My dad would always work out with my brother (Max) and me and he taught me how to play the game of baseball and he probably had the greatest influence on me and was always a huge part of it," Diaz said. "My Dad would always push me to do the things he was doing even though he was a lot older than me so it forced me to compete and play the best I possibly could."

Acalanes head coach Connors Hornsby graduated from Acalanes in 2012, played for Saint Mary's College, and is the great nephew of Hall of Famer Rogers Hornsby (second highest career batting average of all time) has been watching Diaz play since he was 8 years old. "I played with Davis' brother Max," Hornsby said. "When I came back to Acalanes to coach Davis' sophomore year, I was able to see how Davis had grown as a player and also as a human being. It's been a privilege and honor to have a once in a lifetime player like Davis come through the program."

It was more than just the ability to play the game that allowed Diaz to stand above the other players. "Baseball is a game of adjustments so you're never going to feel the same each day," Diaz said. "I'm still trying to learn as much as I can, working on the small things and different mentalities. I'm constantly thinking with each pitch. All the great players are able to adjust. On defense, the biggest thing is preparation so once I get on the field, I don't have to think of anything but just focus on winning and helping my team."

It's the intangibles that set the great ones from the merely good ones and Hornsby saw all of that in Diaz: "He's the complete package on and off the field," Hornsby said. "He's a humble kid that goes about his business in the right way. At practice or a game, he busts his butt and does the little things that don't show up on the stat sheet like staying late to help the coaches clean up. It's the little things that he does right that are easy to overlook. He's a quiet kid that leads by example, showing his leadership by showing up every day, getting his work in and being prepared for every pitch in the infield."

Diaz has tried to learn from every player in the major leagues because "everyone has unique abilities." However, there is one player that Diaz aims to emulate - all-star shortstop Francisco Lindor. "I love the excitement and joy he has on his face when he's playing," Diaz said. "He always competes at a high level and you can tell he always wants to win."

The work that Diaz has put in on the field and in the classroom was not overlooked by the colleges. "I took a lot of visits but Vanderbilt really stuck out to me," Diaz said. "They have a great coaching staff, and I was able to build a great relationship with them. It just felt like home, and I was very comfortable with them, so I committed to go there at the beginning of my junior year."

Davis now has another decision to make. On July 12, Diaz was selected in the 12th round of the Major League Baseball Draft by the Arizona Diamondbacks. Like all high school prospects, Diaz will have to decide whether to go pro or head to Vanderbilt. If he begins college, Diaz will not be eligible to be drafted again until after his junior year.

It was more than just baseball for Diaz at Acalanes. "I loved every minute of high school," Diaz said. "Unfortunately, with the virus, we only had two and a half years in person but I'm very grateful for the relationships and memories and the other times with the students and teachers. I'm just very thankful for

everything I went through at Acalanes and all the sacrifices the teachers made for us to help us achieve."

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