



Sports

MSU's winningest pitcher gets deserved chance



**BRIAN
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Free Press

All Matt McMurtry wanted was a chance to play pro baseball. Now he has one — and the news of it arrived in storybook fashion.

The Minnesota State pitcher was in his native North Platte, Neb., Wednesday, helping the

womenfolk fold ribbons for his impending wedding.

He was keeping tabs on the major league draft via mlb.com, but not paying rapt attention.

"I really didn't feel like it was going to happen," he says of his chances.

Thirty rounds of the draft came and went without his name popping up on the screen. Then in the 31st round — bingo.

San Francisco Giants.

For McMurtry, the moment was surreal.

"I didn't know what to think at first," says the Mavericks' all-time winningest pitcher, who ceased his ribbon-folding then and there.

McMurtry can be excused for saving

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his left arm for more important matters.

He got married Saturday and will report to the Giants' minor league base in Scottsdale, Ariz., the day he gets back from his honeymoon.

Minnesota State pitching coach Matt Magers says McMurtry's good fortune — new bride included — couldn't have happened to a nicer guy.

"I'm so happy for him," Magers says. "There was talk last year of Matty getting drafted, but nothing happened."

Magers says McMurtry's prospects of getting picked perhaps took a downturn this season because his velocity, never high to begin with, slipped a bit.

But Gaylord-native Magers, a 16th round Chicago Cubs pick out of South Dakota State in 1997, knew McMurtry was on the Giants' radar, and called a Giants scout the night before the draft to advocate for his pitcher.

"He deserves that chance," Magers says. "He was arguably the best pitcher we've had at MSU, and we've had a lot of pitchers signed. I feel like I owed Matt the call to the Giants scout after what he has done for the program."

McMurtry began his college career as a redshirt freshman at NCAA Division I Nebraska. He transferred to Minnesota State to be with his girlfriend, now wife, softball player Amy Lewis, who also hails from North Platte.

McMurtry finished his MSU career with a 28-8 record and was a first-team All-Region

pick each of the past two seasons.

But big-league scouts favor tall, hard throwers, and McMurtry is neither.

He's generously listed at 5-foot-11, 180 pounds, and his success comes from changing speeds and hitting his spots, which, ultimately, is the recipe for pitching success at any level.

Plus, he's lefthanded, a perpetually coveted commodity.

"With my size, that's my ticket," he says.

He received a \$2,500 signing bonus. With wedding costs what they are, that should just about cover the tab for those ribbons.

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