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Draft pick will attend Stanford while playing in Nats' farm system

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By Joseph White, AP Sports Writer

WASHINGTON — Jack McGeary wanted to go college. The Washington Nationals wanted him to be a part of their grand rebuilding plan.

Turns out, he'll do both.

The Nationals announced Thursday an unusual arrangement in the 18-year-old draft pick's contract that will allow him to attend Stanford while developing in Washington's minor league farm system.

"All my life I've wanted to go to Stanford, and all my life I've wanted to be a major league baseball player," McGeary said. "So if you can do two at the same time, why wouldn't you do it?"

During the first three years of the deal, McGeary will pitch in the minors from June to September. He'll attend school the rest of the year but will keep himself in shape with Nationals-monitored throwing and conditioning regimens.

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"We felt with Stanford's schedule that we could get the starts and innings in - with him getting his education in - without affecting his development," general manager Jim Bowden said.

The compromise came about after the Nationals selected the left-hander in the sixth round in the June draft. McGeary was rated as the 18th-best pitching prospect among draft-eligible players by Baseball America, but he fell in the draft because he was expected to play at Stanford. He went 6-1 with a 0.88 ERA and 80 strikeouts in 40 innings over seven starts as a senior at Roxbury Latin High School in West Roxbury, Mass.

With a midnight deadline approaching to sign the pick, the Nationals and McGeary agreed late Wednesday to terms of the contract, which includes a \$1.8 million signing bonus - an extraordinarily high figure for a player chosen so late. Washington has now signed its top 20 picks in the 2007 draft.

"We have to make decisions that are best for the organization," Bowden said. "Some of them are extremely difficult. This is a special person, and a special pitcher."

Said McGeary: "The creativity on the part of the Nationals was outstanding."

McGeary will join Washington's Gulf Coast League affiliate until classes start next month. Should he make the big league 25-man roster in the next three years, the contract calls for him to commit to the Nationals full-time.

"All of us want the same thing," Bowden said. "We want him to get a Stanford education. We want him to be a Cy Young award winner and help us win a World Series."

McGeary was asked if he had decided on a major at Stanford.

"Not really," he said.

"Baseball," Bowden said.

The Associated Press

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