



Stotz still on top of his game in evolving recruiting world

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Dean Stotz found a hidden gem in Billings in 1981, signing left-handed pitcher Jeff Ballard to a scholarship to play at Stanford University.



Thirty years later, Stotz is still coaching at Stanford. And still looking for hidden gems.

"It's a whole different world now," said Stotz, who this spring finished his 35th year on the Stanford coaching staff. "Back then, you could really uncover a kid that other schools or pro scouts didn't know about."

"Now with all the technology that's out there and all the exposure kids get, that almost never happens. But you still look for them."

Stotz will be the keynote speaker tonight at the banquet for the Class AA Northwest Regional Legion baseball tournament, which begins Thursday at Dehler Park.

The banquet will start at 7 p.m. at the Billings Hotel and Convention Center. The cost is \$25 per person, which includes a steak dinner. Seating will be limited to 400 people on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Ballard, who is now the board chairman for Billings Legion Baseball, played on three College World Series teams at Stanford (1982, '83 and '85) and went on to play seven years in Major League Baseball. His MLB career was highlighted by an 18-8 record with the Baltimore Orioles in 1989.

Signings like Ballard have earned Stotz a reputation as one of the elite recruiters in college baseball. Stanford has played in the College World Series 14 times and won national championships in 1987 and '88.

"The recruiting class in 1981 that included Jeff is really what started it all," said Stotz, who played in the 1966 Little League World Series for Sacramento, Calif. "We've had a great run."

"In the last 31 years, out of every recruiting class that has come to Stanford and stayed for four years, all but one class has played in Omaha (the College World Series). "I'm proud to be part of the group that has put that run together, and Jeff should be proud to be part of the class that got it started."

Stotz also signed Billings Scarlets pitcher Nolan Gallagher, who pitched for Stanford from 2005-07 and was a fourth-round pick of the Seattle Mariners in 2007.

He said Gallagher, a hard-throwing right-hander from Red Lodge, is a perfect example of how college recruiting has changed over the years.

"Back in Jeff's day, you could come to a place like Billings and uncover a kid like that," he said. "Now, there's no way you could hide an arm like that. All it takes is one guy to put something on the Internet about a kid and everybody knows about him."

"College recruiting has become a science where we're looking for different things than the pro scouts are. Things like poise and composure and the ability to compete ... those are not measurable tools for the pro scouts. Those are the things that keep me energized and motivated in my job."