

# Recruiting's no ego game to Crissey

By Chris McCosky  
staff writer

STEVE BERTELSON has coached baseball for six years at Kansas City Community College — one of the more successful JC programs in the country. His baseball season ended last week and his recruiting season began.

First stop, as it has been for the two previous years, was Plymouth Canton High School in southeastern Michigan — a bit removed from Kansas City.

As Bertelson started out at the sun-baked Canton field Saturday, he was asked the obvious question — why Canton?

His face, every bit as sun-baked as the field, grew pensive. He needed only two words to answer the question: "Fred Crissey."

But he also knew the answer would be insufficient and would lead to more questions. So he began at the beginning.

"COACH CRISSEY and I worked together at a couple summer baseball camps. We got to know each other pretty well. I came down to look at his team one year and have been coming back since."

"He has so much knowledge of the game and can communicate what he knows to the kids. You don't see anyone out here (pointing to the Canton infielders) who doesn't know the basic fundamentals of the game. That's important. It saves college coaches a lot of headaches having a kid come into the program already schooled in the fundamentals of the game," Bertelson said.

John Longridge played for Crissey for four years at Canton. He graduated last year and became Bertelson's first recruit from this area. Longridge

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— Fred Crissey  
Canton baseball coach

played a smooth second base and hit .336 for a KCJC team that finished with a 53-10 record and ranked No. 6 in the nation.

This year, Bertelson came to Canton needing a couple of pitchers and a catcher. After seeing Canton play Friday and Saturday, he has tendered pitchers Mark Coburn and Bucky Blake and catcher Dwayne Bennett.

"THE THING about coach (Crissey) is that he won't tell us someone has talent if he isn't sure," Bertelson said. "He really gets to know his people, he gets real close. He knows what they can and can't do. He has kind of a dual perspective. He knows what I like and what he's got."

Bertelson isn't the only college coach to have discovered Crissey's program. Presently, Fred Rumberger and Mike Battaglia are playing at The School of the Ozarks in Point Lookout, Mo. Scott Ford, who originally signed with the Ozarks, is now playing at David Lipscomb College in Tennessee. Bryan Capener is playing at Morehead State, Bill Hanus at Michigan State, Mark Bennett at Alma, Jim Dillon at Hillsdale, Tim Collins at Siena Heights, Scott Bricker at Olivet, Jamie

Chilcote at Eastern Michigan and Marty McCarthy at Ohio State — to mention only the players since 1982.

Unofficially, Crissey has sent some 80 of his players on to college programs. Some have played, some haven't. But, 90 percent of those players have earned a college degree.

"WHATEVER HAPPENS," Crissey said, "baseball has to be used as a means to an end. Not the other way around. Whatever happens in college, whether you play or sit or turn pro, it's all gravy. The important thing is that you're in college and getting a degree and baseball is helping pay for it."

Crissey used Brian Stemberger as an example. Stemberger earned a full-ride scholarship at Eastern Michigan University. He was later drafted by the Toronto Blue Jays and seemed on his way to the Major Leagues when he blew his arm out.

"You can sit around and feel sorry for Brian because he didn't get to the majors," Crissey said. "But, look at it this way. He still got his education and now he has a better than average job."

Every coach has his or her own philosophy on how to handle recruiting. Some stay completely out of it, preferring to let the family handle the re-

sponsibility. Some will act as advisers, sending out literature or films of the prospect.

Crissey will do whatever is desired of him. If he is asked to help — he's in.

"BASI... I.V. it's a familiar thing," he said. "The parent wants to handle it, that's fine. If they want to use me as an adviser, that's fine also. But if they make this decision, or they want me to help them get a spot, then it can get tough."

"I won't send a kid someplace he can't play. Parents sometimes have trouble understanding that. They sometimes have a different idea about their kid's abilities. Sometimes there's animosity. If I don't think a kid can play somewhere, I say so. And that's not an easy thing to do."

Crissey, because of his reputation as a solid teacher of baseball fundamentals and because he is a straight shooter, has won the respect of many professional and college coaches. So respected is he, coaches sometimes recruit players on Crissey's recommendation, sight unseen.

"I try never to be false," Crissey said. "It's one of the hardest things in coaching. Because it's such an ego thing, it's easy to get yourself mixed up with a kid. It becomes almost a father situation. You like to be able to say you sent a kid to Michigan or to Arizona State or to the pros. But, if the kid can't play there, you're not doing anyone any good. You have to be honest."



Fred Crissey's success at Plymouth Canton isn't measured by his won-loss record alone — just ask any college or pro baseball scout.

## Cordero rides at DRC Sunday

Angel Cordero Jr., regarded as one of the top jockeys in the world, will be riding as part of a 10-race program Sunday at Ladbrooke DRC. Post time is 6 p.m.

Donald Drew, president of Ladbrooke DRC, recruited and finalized the agreement to bring Cordero to the Livonia track.

"It should be exciting for our patrons to see the top jockeys at Ladbrooke compete against one of the best jockeys in the world," Drew said.

Cordero, who recently guided Spenard A Buck to victory in the 111th running of the Kentucky Derby, will honor his racing commitments Sunday afternoon in New York and then fly to Detroit for the evening card.

"I am impressed with Ladbrooke's attempts to rebuild thoroughbred racing in Detroit, and I'm looking forward to riding there," he said.

Cordero, with career earnings of over \$94 million, became the first jockey to sweep the N.Y. Racing Association's Fall Championship Series, capturing the Woodward, Marlboro Cup and Jockey Club Gold Cup aboard Slew O'Gold.

He had twice won the Eclipse Award as the nation's leading jockey (1982-83) and became the fourth rider in racing history to win 5,000 races (in 1983).

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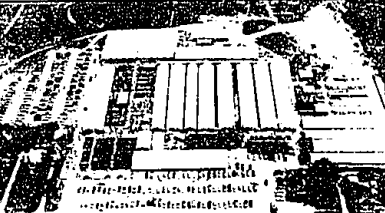
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