

GET TO KNOW A GRIZZLIE: TREVOR ACHENBACH

By Jason Guerette

Trevor Achenbach has taken a long journey through the game of baseball, a journey which has led him from his hometown of Billings, Montana through college and into the professional ranks. And after playing for two seasons in 2018-19 with the River City Rascals, he returns to the St. Louis area for what will be his fourth full season in the Frontier League as one of the leaders on the Grizzlies' roster.

The veteran infielder originally signed to play for Steve Brook in Ottawa in 2021, but regulations at the Canadian border forced the cancellation of the season for the Titans, and Achenbach was then selected second overall in the Frontier League Dispersal Draft by the Lake Erie Crushers. He went on to have a great season in Ohio, batting .275 with 15 home runs, 22 doubles, 57 RBIs and 54 runs scored while playing in all 96 games. The prior season in 2019 with River City, he was voted a midseason all-star, batting .259 with 14 home runs, 14 doubles, and 45 RBIs along with 55 runs scored in 83 games while helping the Rascals win the championship.

Despite that success so far in the Frontier League, Achenbach didn't start out destined for a professional baseball career in Montana.

"Hockey was my main sport growing up, along with baseball," Achenbach said. "I didn't play Legion baseball, which most top guys in (Montana) do. I played what they call 'juniors and seniors,' which gave me the opportunity to play high school golf- my grandmother was actually my assistant golf coach at the time. Baseball wasn't a super-high focus for me in high school- I hoped I could go play hockey when I was done with high school, but then I moved (to Nevada) my senior year, and hockey kind of disappeared. I found out I was pretty good at baseball, and I had hoped I could play another sport past high school, and that's what I did."

Achenbach then headed to Clackamas Community College in Oregon for two seasons as a baseball player, and then to NAIA power Oklahoma Wesleyan for an additional two years. He made his professional debut in 2017 with the Crushers, and also played in the United Shore league later that summer.

He then joined up with the Rascals the following year, and forged a close relationship with now-Grizzlies manager Steve Brook that endures to this day.

"I'm very excited," Achenbach said about joining the Grizzlies this year. "I came to Gateway because of the way Steve manages the team. He has expectations for his players, but he's very open. He's confident in letting his guys just go out and play. You learn something new every year, from each manager, but once I got to River City (in 2018), he gave me that confidence."

As a player entering his fourth season in the Frontier League who has played at an all-star level, Achenbach also reflected on how he has progressed from when he first signed as a professional with Lake Erie in 2017.

“I think when I started out as a rookie, I was nervous,” he said. “I was way overdoing stuff when I first got into it- like, five times a day, I would be like ‘there’s got to be one thing that’s going to let me snap out of whatever hitting thing I was in.’ I think for me, the key was getting back to keeping it simple, and having fun. Now every year that I come back to play, I’m super-excited because know I’m going have fun with my teammates, and that’s when I play my best.”

He will join a couple of his former Rascals teammates from the championship season of 2019 this summer, and as a hitter who has been a visiting player at Gateway many times, he also knows how much fun it can be to come up to bat in Sauget.

“That’s another exciting thing about being at Gateway,” Achenbach said with a smile. “I had a good year last year playing in a not-so-hitter-friendly park, but (GCS Credit Union Ballpark) gives you a chance to put up some home run numbers. I think the guys are looking forward to playing there for sure.”