

Plonk twins sign pro baseball contracts

Kings Mountain's Betty Cloninger will be doing a lot of traveling over the next several months.

Mrs. Cloninger has been a frequent visitor to Yankee Stadium, where her husband Tony is Bullpen Coach for the New York Yankees. Now, she'll be adding Huntington, W. Va., and Tampa, Fla., to her list of favorite places to visit.

Mrs. Cloninger's twin sons, Chad and Chris Plonk, signed professional baseball contracts Saturday with the New York Yankees and Chicago Cubs, respectively, and they left Kings Mountain over the weekend to begin 10-day mini camps with their parent organizations. Chris is in Meza, Arizona and in 10 days will be assigned to Chicago's Rookie League team in West Virginia. Chad is in Tampa and will remain there after mini camp to play with the Yankees Rookie League team in the Gulf Coast League.

The Plonk twins recently completed their second season with Manatee Junior College in Florida. Chad, a first baseman and relief

pitcher, hit .300 and slammed six home runs and Chris, who played third base, hit .285. Chris was drafted in the 26th round by the Cubs and Chad signed with the Yankees as a free agent.

Both Plonks had been drafted by the Yankees last year but passed up pro ball to get in another season on the collegiate level. Both had been offered full scholarships at major colleges but, this time, decided to sign with the pros and complete their education during the off-season.

"This is the first time they've ever been apart," said their mother Monday morning. "They have been inseparable. They felt like it was just destined to be this time...to part and go their separate ways. They won't be seeing each other again until October. It's been quite an experience. It was sad, but when they both got to where they were going they were ecstatic."

Mrs. Cloninger said the twins are already talking with each other by long distance.

Chris and Chad began their baseball careers in Kings Mountain

at the age of four. They played together in town from Tee League ball all the way through high school, where they helped lead Kings Mountain's Mountaineers to the state championship. Then, they went as a pair to play college ball in Florida.

"I can honestly say, considering the feeling and compassion they have for each other, that the thing that would have hurt them more than separating would have been if one had gotten the opportunity to play pro ball and the other had not," Mrs. Cloninger said. "Both have been given the opportunity of a lifetime. They're going to work on college during the off-season. They just felt like they had those two years behind them and they're ready to move on. I'm thankful that they got two years of college. They can always go back to school."

The past three months were trying times for the twins. First, they had to decide whether or not they would play more college ball. Then, they had until Memorial Day to sign with the Yankees or go through the draft process again.

They decided they would enter the draft again and see what happened.

"Chris got drafted by the Cubs, and the Cleveland Indians were interested in both of them," Mrs. Cloninger said. "It worked out that Chad didn't get drafted but he had a real good offer from the Yankees as a free agent, so he decided to go that route. They signed their contracts on the same day. It was unreal the way everything worked out."

"I think they're real happy for each other," she added. "Now, they can be excited about their own career. With me having four children and knowing the closeness that the four have, I can say there's nothing like a closeness with identical twins. They feel each other's pains. Their desires are so much the same. There's a special bond between them that a regular brother or sister relationship is not quite like."

With the signing of the Plonk twins, Kings Mountain can now boast of having four players from the 1989 state championship team to play pro ball. Paul Brannon, who was a third round draft choice

in 1990, is with the Seattle Mariners Class A team in San Bernardino, Calif., and Stuart Spires played briefly in the Atlanta Braves organization.

"Kings Mountain has a lot to be proud of," said Mrs. Cloninger. "Chad and Chris had two years of college and can reflect back on the past and still have high regard for Coach Bruce Clark and his program. Their experience with him and his high school team -- and especially winning the state championship -- is something they'll remember for a lifetime. They had a lot of good things to happen since then, but to be able to look back on high school and have a high regard for your coach and know how he motivates his ball clubs speaks well for him."

Mrs. Cloninger, a life-long baseball fan, now says she'll have to be careful that she doesn't get her caps mixed up.

"I'll be on the road a lot," she said, "but I love it. The Yankees have really improved this year and they have the youngest coaching staff in the major leagues, but it's

an experienced coaching staff. Buck Showalter is only 37 years old but is an excellent manager. Clete Boyer, 55, who was the best man in our wedding, is the third base coach and has a lot of experience. Frank Howard is 56 and is an excellent hitting instructor and first base coach Eddie Napoleon is 51 and has a lot of experience. Monk Meyer is 61 and is the bench coach, and he has a lot of experience.

"They just have a wonderful situation," she added. "Everybody is so compatible and get along real well. I've gotten to where I know the players. We've got some fine ballplayers and we've got some really good Christian guys on that team. They're working harder and things are going much better for them."

"New York's a great place. I especially like Yankee Stadium. We practically live at the stadium. The city is exciting but Tony and I are both glad that our home is in Kings Mountain. There's just no place like Kings Mountain."



Kings Mountain's Caja Ormand is congratulated by Coach Bruce Clark as he rounds third base on a two-run home run in Saturday's 4-2 American Legion victory over Shelby.

Post 155 edges Shelby 4-2

Caja Ormand's two-run home run in the bottom of the sixth inning propelled Kings Mountain Post 155 to a 4-2 victory over Shelby in American Legion baseball action Saturday night at KM's Lancaster Field.

The victory evened Kings Mountain's record at 1-1. Shelby dropped to 1-2.

Stephen Fisher went the distance for Post 155, scattering 11 hits and striking out nine. Steve Gold went the route for Shelby, giving up six hits and fanning 11.

From the beginning, the fans knew they were in for an outstanding pitcher's duel between the two talented right-handers who led their teams to 1-2 finishes in the local high school race. The pitchers were stingy with hits, and when they did allow runners on base they were still in total control.

Shelby finally broke the scoring ice in the top of the sixth when Matt Zirkle doubled and scored on a single by Reggie Cobb; but Kings Mountain came right back in the bottom of the sixth and took a 2-1 lead on Fisher's triple and Ormand's home run over the left field fence.

Post 155 increased its lead to 4-1 in the bottom of the eighth. Donald Bell led off with a pinch-hit double and was sacrificed to third by Todd Ware. After Fisher walked, Bell scored on a wild pitch and Fisher scored on a single by David R.

Jenkins.

Shelby added its final run in the top of the ninth as Robert Curtis, who was hit by a pitched ball, scored on a double by Gold.

Lloyd, a Crest High product, collected three hits for Shelby and Ormand had two for Kings Mountain.

Post 155 opened its season last Thursday at Hunter Huss with a 6-3 loss to Gaston Post 23.

Benji Ingle and Shane Webb split pitching duties for Kings Mountain, with Ingle taking the loss.

Kings Mountain collected only six hits. David R. Jenkins was 2-for-4 and the only Post 155 batter to get more than one hit.

Kings Mountain has a heavy schedule during the coming weeks, playing nine games in 10 nights beginning with a game tonight at 7:30 at Belmont.

Friday, Kings Mountain hosts Bessemer City and Saturday and Sunday Post 155 travels to Shelby and Cherryville, respectively.

Next week, Kings Mountain hosts Belmont Monday, Gastonia Tuesday, Cherryville Wednesday and Stanley Thursday. They take off on Friday, then host Stanley on Saturday.

Score by innings: R-H-E
 Sh. 000 001 001 2-11-2
 KM 000 002 02x 4-6-1

Steve Gold and Kevin Moss, Mike Newton (8); Stephen Fisher and Kevin Melton. WP - Fisher (1-0). LP - Gold. HR - Ormand (1).

Parts Available

The Kings Mountain Little theatre has two male roles available in their upcoming production of MASH. If interested contact Call Chuck Wilson 732-3361 ext. 259.

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Soccer camp set

The Runnin' Bulldog Soccer Academy will be conducting a week-long soccer instructional camp at Davidson Park August 2-7.

Tony Setzer, head men's soccer coach at Gardner-Webb, and Dan Potter, soccer coach at Kings Mountain High School, will be co-directors. The sessions will begin at 8 a.m. and end each day at 12 noon.

Players will be grouped by age and ability to insure the best instruction. Both boys and girls will be attending, but the coaches ask that they be at least five years of age.

The cost is \$75. To register, send the age, name, address and phone number of the camper, along with a \$25 deposit, to Runnin' Bulldog Soccer Academy, P.O. Box 1122, Shelby, 28151-1122.

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Watch the Rangers take on the Columbia Mets and have dinner for **HALF PRICE!** Game time is 7:00 pm and all beverages and food (except pizza and sno cones) are half price tonight.

Tomorrow night -- DYNAMITE LADY!!!

The lovely Allison Bly will climb into her coffin and blow it up with dynamite after the Rangers game with the Columbia Mets. Gates open at 6:00 p.m.

For ticket information, call 867-3721.

Sims Park - 1001 N. Marietta St., one block from I-85 & Hwy. 321 - Gastonia, NC