

Tyson Kimm

Matthew Tyson Kimm was born on November 30, 1972, the eldest child – of, ultimately, three – of Bruce and Deborah Kimm. Bruce was climbing the baseball ziggurat on his path to Major League fame as Mark Fidrych's catcher in 1976 and 1977, and then as a coach in two All-Star games and on the World Champion 1997 Florida *Marlins*, and at the time of Tyson's birth he had just finished an instructional league season as a member of the California Angels organization.

Although never easy growing up in the shadow of greatness, Tyson had carved out an outstanding baseball reputation of his own. His experience in Little League and in PONY baseball was somewhat different than that of most boys, as his family travelled in the summers to stay with Bruce during the season until Tyson entered 8th grade. Despite that, the younger Kimm was talented enough to play in one game for coach Dan Frese while only in second grade, and two years later played his first full Little League season, this time under Dean Schulte and Jeff Holland. Once in 8th grade, Kimm would live with his grandparents – longtime Norway high school and town team star and youth coach Lyle Kimm and Mary Alice Kimm– until his family returned to Iowa.

It was in that season, before formally entering high school but still eligible for coach Jim Van Scoyoc's team, that he first played for the *Tigers*. That squad ultimately won yet another of the school's twenty state titles, but Kimm left following the substate game in order to join his family for part of the major league season.

Much like his father, Tyson Kimm has nothing but positive feelings for Norway, the community, and the baseball legacy. "Jim Van Scoyoc was great to play for...you always knew where you stood. It was simple if you played hard." The coach, he noted, was "not a screamer, but you never wanted to let him down" and Kimm and his teammates never went into a game not expecting to win. This confidence was not born of arrogance, but rather from absolute trust in his teammates (and them in him) and in the innate conviction that every player wearing a Norway uniform knew how to play the game the right way and what was expected, and that they were simply better coached than their opponent regardless of the other school's size. He also was aware that "We weren't just representing Norway High School. We were representing the whole town." Also like his father and almost every other former Norway player, he appreciated being 'from' Norway, and 'of' Norway.

Tyson attended Norway High School, graduating with his class in 1991, but played baseball only through 1990, his junior year. Along with teammate and fellow future professional Aaron Van Scoyoc, and a very talented team, Kimm helped bring Norway state titles in 1988 and 1990, and was selected to the Iowa all-state team following his sophomore and junior years.

The high school baseball season in Iowa extends well past the end of the regular school year, and due to his father's unique occupation, Kimm was forced to choose between one final shot at another state crown and the opportunity to spend one final, pre-college summer with his father. The choice was difficult, but Tyson left Norway following graduation to join his dad in San Diego, California. There he joined the prestigious Southern California *Palomino* baseball league, and lived with assistant coach Rich Hinzo when the *Padres* were on the road. This was an arrangement similar to one he'd enjoyed a few years earlier, when his father was coaching for Pete Rose and the Cincinnati *Reds*. Then Tyson had played in Cincinnati's "Knothole League", a vast organization comprising over 600 teams, and lived with the family of coach Richard Wilson while pitching and playing shortstop on a team that defeated a team from Harrison, Indiana, for the 1984 title.

Tyson had been drafted by the Seattle *Mariners* before he left for California, but had not yet started contract negotiations. After the Mariners' watched him play on his Chula Vista team, both with and against a list of future major leaguers that included Benji Gil, Jose Silva, and Mike Saepe, they were impressed enough to offer him a \$75,000 package that included a signing bonus and college tuition. Tyson declined, opting instead to return to the Midwest and enroll at Nebraska's Creighton University that fall. Kimm performed brilliantly for the *Blue Jays* while earning his degree in Journalism and Mass Communications, specializing in advertising.

On the diamond he started at shortstop for all four years. After his freshman season Kimm returned to California to play summer ball with the amateur San Diego *Indians*. He followed that the next year by playing in the prestigious Cape Cod League. While there, with Chatham, Tyson endured his first significant injury when he dislocated his left shoulder diving for a ball. The next fall, entering his junior year at Creighton, he reinjured the shoulder in a basketball game but still managed to stroke twenty-six doubles, a single-season mark that remains second all-time in the school's record books. He dislocated his left shoulder again in the conference tournament versus Wichita State in 1994, finally requiring surgery to repair the joint. The silver lining in that cloud, at least from Creighton's perspective, was that Kimm returned to play his senior season. In 1995, late in his senior season, again in a game against conference rival Wichita State (NCAA runner-up in 1991 and 1993), Tyson injured his right shoulder so badly that he was forced to miss the conference tournament entirely.

The injury did not deter the Philadelphia *Phillies* from taking Kimm in the twenty-first round of the 1995 draft. Upon signing, the twenty-two year old was assigned to the Batavia *Clippers* of the Class A New York/Penn League, but the change of venue, and the fact that he was now playing for pay, did not improve his ability to stay healthy. Racing across home plate in a game against Pittsfield, Tyson tore cartilage in his right knee and spent a few weeks on the disabled list. In his first game back, against the Williamsport *Cubs* (his father was managing one of the Cubs minor league teams at the time), he went 4-for-4 at the plate. The season ended with Kimm having played sparingly – only fourteen games at shortstop – but the potential he displayed at the plate convinced the organization to promote him for the 1996 campaign.

That next season Tyson played both second- and third-base for the Piedmont *Boll Weevils* of the Class A South Atlantic League. He started slowly at the plate, but as his batting average began to improve he pulled a hamstring muscle in a game versus Hickory. Despite several more injuries, Kimm garnered a .961 fielding average and as a switch-hitter picked up twenty-one hits in twenty-five games, but the *Phillies* still released him at the end of the year.

Tyson's baseball career, though, was only beginning. In 1996 he joined the staff the start-up company 'Perfect Game USA', a baseball scouting organization and showcase/tournament sponsor, and (as of 2011) he has risen to the office of partner and vice president. He and his wife, Lindsey (Keoppel), and their children (son Carson James and daughter Hadley Rae) reside in Cedar Rapids.