

# IN Norwin

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*Max McDowell*  
drafted by the Brewers

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# Major League Draft Pick

By JENNIFER BROZAK

PHOTOS BY STEPHEN SLADE



# Norwin grad **Max McDowell** selected by the Milwaukee Brewers.

**A**ccording to the NCAA, of the nearly 8 million students who compete in high school athletics every year, only a fraction move on to become professional athletes. North Huntingdon native Max McDowell, 21, just became one of the few.

McDowell, a 6-foot-208-pound catcher at the University of Connecticut, became a 13th-round selection of the Milwaukee Brewers in June's Major League Baseball Draft. He finalized his contract with the Brewers on July 17 and will begin his professional baseball career as a catcher with the Brewer's minor league team.

"It's always been a dream of mine to play professional baseball," says McDowell. "I've worked hard at it, so it's exciting."

McDowell, a 2012 graduate of Norwin High School, has been a starter since his freshman year with the UConn Huskies, finishing this past season with a .286 batting average and a .392 on-base percentage in 60 games. Though he's played different positions throughout his baseball career, he thrives as a catcher.

"It's my favorite position, for sure," he says. "It's tough on your body, but you get to be involved in every play of the game. You really have to be mentally locked in. I love it."

His passion for the position shows – he's thrown out 19 of the 41 runners who've attempted to steal bases against him.

McDowell says he started playing Little League baseball around age 10, but that his instinct for throwing a ball started when he was still a toddler.

"My parents told me they could never give me anything to hold while we were in public, because as soon as they did, I would launch it," he says with a laugh.

At Norwin, he played four seasons of varsity baseball under head coach Mike Liebdzinski, earning All-Section honors as a sophomore, junior and senior. He also helped the team to four



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## Major League Draft Pick

straight section championships and, as a junior, was named the WPIAL Player of the Year. He also set the Norwin career record for batting averages at .560.

At UConn, McDowell he has secured a number of accolades. As a freshman, he tied for fourth in the Big East with 14 base runners caught stealing, and he stole six bases himself in 8 attempts during the season. As a sophomore, he threw out 19 of 55 base stealers and was named to American weekly honor roll, the All Conference First Team and the 2013-14 American Athletic Conference All-Academic Team. This past year, as a junior, McDowell was named to the American Athletic Conference Second Team All-Conference, the NEIBA All-New England Second Team and the Johnny Bench Award midseason watch list. He also led the nation with 11 sacrifice flies.

Jim Penders, head baseball coach at UConn, says McDowell is an outstanding catcher. "He can receive, block, and throw with the best of them," he says. "He is also a very good offensive player. He is very difficult to strike out, and he has gap power and a very sound swing. He even runs well for a catcher."

McDowell was at home with his family in North Huntingdon, watching the draft, when he learned of his selection by the Brewers.

"It was awesome," he says. "I got a lot of high-fives."

Penders, for one, isn't surprised by McDowell's success. "Max represents himself and his family with class at all times," he says. "Not only is he a great baseball player, he is a top-notch student, and an unselfish teammate and community leader. Norwin should be very proud of him." ■

