

# Twins' Swarzak plays before family, friends

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MIAMI — For Minnesota Twins relief pitcher Anthony Swarzak, a two-game series against the Miami Marlins turned into a reunion.

Swarzak returned to play baseball in South Florida for the first time since he graduated from Nova High School in 2004.

Longtime Nova baseball coach Pat McQuaid was among 40 friends and family of Swarzak in attendance at Tuesday night's game.

"It's been an interesting experience," Swarzak said on playing with the Twins in Miami for the first time. "I had to leave a lot of tickets and worry about things that I'm not used to, worrying about, like getting everybody to the stadium and making sure everyone is having an OK time."

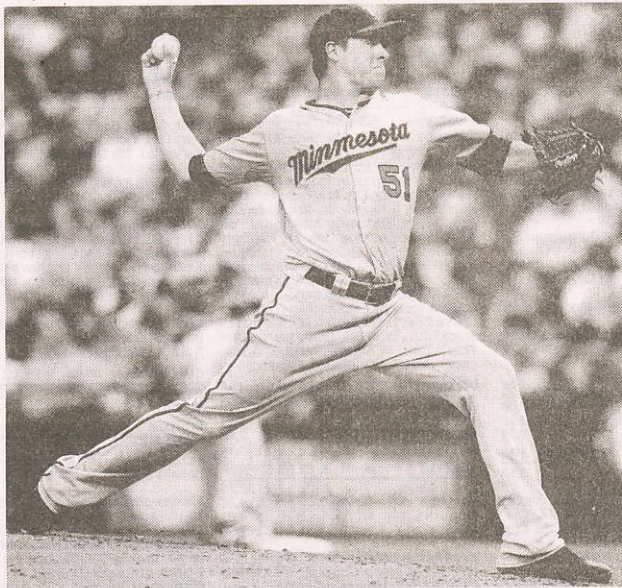
"All in all, it's been fun," he said. "It's good to be able to come home and see the family and see people I normally don't get to see, like my high school coach [McQuaid]."

Swarzak, the 61st overall pick in the 2004 draft, was an early second-round pick for Minnesota. Though Swarzak's dad, Roy Swarzak, was leaning more toward his son playing college baseball, his son's major league dreams were too close to pass up.

"Anthony, since he was a little kid, had his heart set on playing pro ball and he didn't want to delay that," said Roy Swarzak, of Coral Springs, before Wednesday afternoon's game.

Swarzak, who didn't get in the games on Tuesday or Wednesday, had high praise for his high school coach.

The two chatted briefly before the start of Tuesday night's game. Swarzak



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Anthony Swarzak, who starred at Nova High School, got to see his high school coach Pat McQuaid on Tuesday night.

greeted McQuaid with a: "How ya' doing coach?" and a smile.

"I can't tell you how much Pat McQuaid has done for me, my career and just me becoming a man in general," said Swarzak, 27. "And I'm not the only one. Every kid that comes through that program, he teaches them how to be a man one way or another and I'll forever be grateful for that."

McQuaid, who recently traveled to Minnesota to watch Swarzak play, has coached five players into the majors.

Doug Johns and Jeff Fiorentino, former Baltimore Orioles; Harry Chappas, former White Sox shortstop; Michael Morse, current Seattle Mariner; and Swarzak all played for McQuaid at Nova.

"It's a treat to see a kid chase their dream and reach their dream," McQuaid said. "They were men playing with boys," McQuaid said of his high school success stories.

In his senior year, Swarzak led the Titans to a state championship. Since then, the right-hander has pitched more than 130 games between his few stints in the minors and his five seasons with the Twins. A righty batter as well, Swarzak has hit two home runs and played 22 games in the 2013 season.

A Nova graduate, McQuaid has coached the school to a national championship, two state championships and more than 10 district championships. In 2010, McQuaid was inducted into the Florida High School Athletic Association Hall of Fame.

The coach said he's happy to continue coaching and has no plans of retiring.

"Sometimes it's getting close," McQuaid said of retiring after 38 years. "It's just nice to watch the kids get better and that's why you coach. Next year, I'm definitely coming back and we'll see what happens."