

**National High School Baseball Coaches Association
2007
Player of the Year**



**Michael Moustakas- Infielder
Chatsworth HS, California**

By **Alan Matthews** –*Baseball America*

If you weren't there, all you need to do is listen as Jason Hisey tells the story. The head coach of USA Baseball's 2006 junior national team and a former Team USA player himself, Hisey was in the third-base dugout during an elimination game of last year's World Junior Championships against Cuba at Huelga Stadium in Sancti Spiritus, Cuba, when Mike Moustakas made "the catch."

With Cuba's best hitter up and Team USA grasping for confidence after an unconvincing showing in the tournament's pool play, Moustakas, an infielder by trade, tracked a deep fly ball to the warning track in left field, gathered himself, and leaped to reach over the wall and steal a three-run home run from Cuban phenom Dayan Viciedo.

"You should have seen him," Hisey likes to recall of Viciedo, the slugger who stopped in the midst of his home run trot when Moustakas made the catch. "It was one of those moments you don't forget."

The play shifted momentum of the game, which Team USA went on to win, and exemplifies the type of player Moustakas has always known he is, but some were reluctant to acknowledge during most of his unprecedented high school career.

The senior from Chatsworth (Calif.) High carried the momentum of his performance in Cuba into this season, belting a California single-season record 24 home runs, which amounted to 52 for his career, also a state record.

"Moose," as he's known around the field, slugged his way to becoming the first high school player drafted this year when he was taken with the second pick by the Royals. He was selected as the Los Angeles City Section player of the year for the second consecutive season, and trumped that honor by becoming just the second player from the Golden State to be named Baseball America's High School Player of the Year.

"One of his last games I saw, he hit two long home runs," Royals scouting director Deric Ladnier said. "It was almost as if you expected it to happen, and it did."

Expecting The Best

Despite Moustakas' track record of performance as an underclassman in high school, the expectations of his professional potential were relatively modest as he prepared for his final campaign. Although he's manned the middle of the diamond as the Chancellors' shortstop since he was a freshman in 2004, somewhere in just about every scouting report on the 5-foot-11, 175-pounder was a line about his pudgy body and lack of a true position.

Last August at the Area Code Games in Long Beach, Moustakas moved from shortstop to third base to catcher, and while he showed some promise at the plate, there was not a consensus he'd hit enough to profile as an everyday player at a corner infield position. Because of the depth of high school hitters in Southern California's Class of 2007, Moustakas entered the spring without a distinct designation as one of the country's elite prospects. He was even considered his team's second-best player, behind third baseman Matt Dominguez.

All along, Moustakas was quietly confident, and this spring the masses began to concur.

"It was one of the few times that (the scouting staff) sat around the room and we felt this guy was going to hit, and he was going to hit big, and everyone in the room felt strongly about that," Ladnier said.

Hitting big became a specialty of Moustakas' as soon as he stepped onto the field for Chatsworth's varsity squad his freshman season. He quickly carved out a spot in the Chancellors' starting lineup and batted .321-2-19 with 23 walks, 10 strikeouts and nine doubles while starting all 35 games for Chatsworth's second of back-to-back national championship teams that went 35-0. A year later he upped his average to .482 with 12 home runs, 51 RBIs, 18 doubles and a .991 fielding percentage as a sophomore.

The records began to fall in 2006. The first one Moustakas claimed was the school's single-season home run record when he slugged 14 to go along with a .427 average as a junior.

He worked diligently on his conditioning and when he came out for his final high school season, weighed in at 6-feet, 190 pounds and matched his uncanny knack for hitting with the physical tools--including an outstanding arm that allowed him to throw high-90s fastballs as Chatsworth's closer--to dominate his competition.

Shattering Season

On May 8 against El Camino Real High (Woodland Hills, Calif.), Moustakas slammed a first-inning home run over the right-field fence for the 48th of his career, breaking the state record set by John Drennen, a first-team All-American in 2005 out of San Diego's Rancho Bernardo High and now an Indians farmhand.

A week later, Chris Walston's (El Capitan High, Lakeside) single-season state record came tumbling down when Moustakas drilled his 22nd home run, another tape-measure shot that sailed over two chain-link fences and landed on the windshield of the opposing team's right fielder's Toyota Corolla.

Moustakas would add two more for good measure down the stretch, helping Chatsworth win another City Section championship and finish with a No. 8 national ranking. He finished his senior season 56-for-97 (.577) with seven doubles, four triples and 59 RBIs. He walked 28 times and struck out twice.

He's humble, a student of the game, well liked by his teammates and classmates and figures to be a multi-millionaire by the end of the summer if he decides to shun Southern California for a chance to sign with Kansas City.

You might not have been there to see it, but his story is one you don't forget.