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## Crestview grad going from ball diamond to silver screen



From left to right, Kent Drank (Crestview grad and current Kettering Fairmont baseball coach), Dave Springer, Kyle Rase, Cory King (baseball coach at Columbus Grove) and Dave Bowen (Crestview Athletic Director) pose for a picture on the set of Gibsonburg at Huntington Park in Columbus on June 17, 2011. The movie is about Kyle Rases Gibsonburg baseball team which won the 2005 State Championship. (Photo submitted by Kyle Rase)

**By Brian Bassett**

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**Because of the amount of passion and emotion that goes into sports and also because of the fact that in sports anything can, and usually does, happen, Hollywood has always gravitated towards movies revolving around sports. The most intriguing sports movies may involve a player who beats the odds and finds success, or a team that defies adversity to become an unlikely champion.**

**For Crestview alumnus Kyle Rase, there was no more unlikely a champion than his 2005 Gibsonburg High School baseball team which took a 6-17 regular season record into the state tournament and came away with a Division IV State Championship. The Golden Bears' final record that season, 14-17. The story of the 2005 Gibsonburg baseball team was a Hollywood-worthy story some thought, including Bob Mahaffey, a film producer from Dublin, Ohio who is taking Gibsonburg's story to the silver screen.**



**Van Wert grad and current ABC 6 (Columbus television) news anchor Natalie Taylor interviews Rase at the filming of Gibsonburg at Huntington Park. Filming of the movie will continue until mid-August. (Photo submitted by Kyle Rase)**

**Rase graduated from Crestview in 1995 and he was part of a Crestview Knight baseball team that, in 1993, reached the state semifinals. "Kyle was the type that would do whatever he was asked, and do it 100 percent," recalled Crestview baseball coach Jim Wharton. "He was a great kid."**

**After high school, Rase went on to study at Bowling Green State University, graduating in the spring of 1999 with a degree in education. Rase got a job working for the BGSU men's basketball team under, then coach, Dan Dakich. "I was working for the BGSU men's basketball team and in order to stay around and work for the team, I had to get a job in the area," Rase said.**

**Gibsonburg High School in the town of Gibsonburg, Ohio, which is about 20 miles due east of Bowling Green, seemed like the perfect fit for Rase. "I got a job there [Gibsonburg] so I could work basketball. I taught during the day and worked basketball [at night]," said Rase, who still makes his home in Bowling Green.**

**Rase got back into baseball in 2005 when he became the head baseball coach at Gibsonburg. The Golden Bears had a rough season going 6-17. "There were no injuries, no suspensions, no ineligible players, nothing like that," Rase Said. " Our league is a very strong baseball league."**

**Gibsonburg plays in the Suburban Lakes League, "We were the only Division IV team. It [the SLL] is made up of all Division II and III teams," Rase said. "Within 10 years they had four different schools make the final four; the competition is really tough.'**

**The Golden Bears found themselves on the short end of the stick often during the regular season, "We had six one-run games and we lost all six," Rase said.**

**The team never gave up, however. "We were hanging in there, good attitudes, good group of kids and I really had to sell them on the idea that the competition we were playing, if**

they were Division IV, they would be really good," Rase said.

Once Gibsonburg reached the tournament, the sub-par season was a thing of the past. "During the tournament trail the kids started believing in themselves, we had a couple big wins early, beat one of our rivals who had run-ruled us during the year," Rase said.

Rase said Gibsonburg started catching breaks that they didn't get during the season, and each win carried momentum to the next game. "Momentum picked up with each one [win] and my big selling point to the kids was, even during state, we were playing teams in our league better than the teams we were playing deep in the tournament," Rase said.

In Gibsonburg's first game of the tournament, they beat a team that had no wins on the season, they followed up with beating a rival who had run-ruled them earlier in the year. In a Regional Semi-Final game Gibsonburg played Kalida, an ironic turn of events for Rase. "In 1995 Kalida beat me in the Regional Semi-Finals at Crestview, I was playing them 10 years later and they had the same coach," Rase said.

The Golden Bears beat Kalida, with a familiar face watching on, Wharton, who had come to watch his ex-player. "During the game there was a situation, I didn't know exactly what to do and I looked in the crowd to him [Wharton] and he gave me the sign. We used the same signs and that's the play we used," Rase said.

The next game for Gibsonburg was an 18-inning win which stretched them on pitching, the next day they beat Edgerton in the Regional Final with a depleted pitching staff.

In the State Semi-Finals, the Golden Bears were one-hit yet pulled out the 2-1 victory. "We had two outs in the bottom of the fifth and had guys on first and second, our batter hit a sky high pop-up to land about six feet in front of the plate, the third baseman fielded it and overthrew first base, two runs scored, we won, 2-1," said Rase who seemingly remembered, in incredible detail, every aspect of the tournament.

In the State championship game the Golden Bears overcame five errors and scored a run in the top of the seventh to seal the, 6-5, come from behind victory to win the State Championship. "In a nutshell, we caught every break, had a great group of kids who believed in themselves and had no pressure on themselves, it was a lot of fun," Rase said.

Rase said that after the team received their championship medals there was one extra and it was a no-brainer what to do with it, he sent it the next day to coach Wharton at Crestview. "He had as big a part as anyone in it," said Rase who continuously credited the town of Convoy and the coaches he played for at Crestview for the success he has achieved.

Rase said his father was the first one who believed that this incredible story had a chance to become a movie or a book some day. "About a week after the State championship I was talking to him on the phone and he said 'why don't you write down everything you can remember, every last detail about the tournament,'" Rase said.

His father was not the only one who saw the potential in Rase's story, Mahaffey, of Xcelerate Media, Inc. in Dublin, Ohio also believed the story had a Hollywood feel. "He contacted me this past fall," Rase said. "The previous year he was at a family get together and he has a niece who married a person from Gibsonburg who had shared the story with him."

Rase and Mahaffey met for the first time last November, and several more times throughout the winter to discuss the possibility of making a movie about the 2005 Gibsonburg baseball team. "I went through pretty much every at-bat of the whole tournament trail and had a lot of conversations with him," Rase said.

Mahaffey decided to take on the project, allowing a \$200,000 budget. Filming began in

**April but kicked into high-gear in mid-May. The film, simply titled "Gibsonburg", is set to be entered in Sundance, Tribeca and Toronto film festivals.**

**Most of the crew for the film are interns from around the Columbus area but there are a few high profile people involved, including comedian/actress Judy Tenuta who is most famous for her appearance in MTV television ads in the mid-1980's.**

**Mahaffey has also brought on an assistant producer who worked on the series "Dallas" and "Murder She Wrote" and Mahaffey's aunt who is an Emmy Award-winning cinematographer.**

**Rase has an active role in the movie, which he says will be about 40 percent baseball and 60 percent made-up Hollywood plot line. "I'm labeled the baseball consultant for the movie and I am also an extra, I'm the assistant coach for Gibsonburg which is kind of funny because I'm right beside the guy that plays me all the time," Rase said.**

**Rase joked that being on the set can be confusing at times, "When you are on the set, they call you by your character and when they say 'coach Rase' I always look and it's him."**

**The good thing about being this active in an independent feature film, is that Rase can include friends and family in the process. On several occasions Rase has brought in people he knows to play extras, including recently, when Crestview Athletic Director Dave Bowen made the trip play a coach on the team that Gibsonburg beat in the State finals while filming at Huntington Park, home of the Columbus Clippers, in down-town Columbus.**

**"It meant a lot that they came down here," Rase said of his friends being involved. "Any time that I have a chance to include anyone that helped me out along the way, I'm going to," Rase said.**

**Driving from Bowling Green to Columbus every weekend to film may be a hectic process for Rase, especially as he teaches summer-school and coaches the Gibsonburg ACME team, but he takes it all in stride. "I'm busy but I wouldn't trade it for anything," Rase said. "I've met a lot of new people who are great people.**

**Once the filming wraps up in August, Rase may get a lot busier. As the film travels to the festivals , Rase will be going all over the country with it, but he will never forget where he came from. " Convoy is a very important place for me, it will always be my home, I love that place," Rase said.**

**Rase even joked that once the film is out he might rent out the Van Wert Cinemas to screen it for all his family and friends back home.**

**For now though, he was his hands full. "Sometimes I almost pinch myself," Rase said. "It is kind of surreal that there is actually a movie being made [about Gibsonburg], an independent feature film, it's a major production."**