



## The Jayhawker

By Jim Merriott

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# Baseball player gets settled here and at college

He moved to Oberlin on Thanksgiving Day 2005. His first meal in Oberlin was the community supper at St. John's Lutheran Church.

Only a few Red Devil athletes, including Joe Mondero and Denton Bailey, worked out beside him at the high school weightroom last summer. He is not a giant, but he is not little, either. Six foot, 3 1/2 inches and 230 pounds, he's still growing at 19.

At Silver Creek High School (Class 4A) in Longmont, he is a legend. Students from seventh grade to seniors flock to see him when he goes back to visit. His pictures run down the high school "Wall of Fame" just outside the gymnasium.

He was first team All-Academic All-State four times in Colorado, All-Academic first team Skyline Conference, and All-Academic First Team Northern Conference, and last year was named the top senior athlete at Silver Creek, receiving a \$500 scholarship.

He was the Most Valuable Player in football (once) and baseball (twice), All-Conference first-team first baseman/pitcher in 2005, Honorable Mention All-State in 2005 in baseball and football. He's a member of the National Honor Society, picked for the National Honor Roll, and lettered 12 times in three sports — football, basketball, and baseball — and set 15 school records.

He has eight no-hit pitching performances, including three perfect games, one of them a seven-inning match where he struck out every batter. He has been scouted by the Texas Rangers, and he will play baseball this summer in the Northwoods League in Minnesota.

But Mark Merriott doesn't like publicity.

"I'm just a regular guy doing my thing," he says. "It's no big deal. I play X-Box just like every other kid."

Mark was the opening-day starting pitcher for Dodge City Community College earlier this month against Western Nebraska Community College of Scottsbluff.

He got a baptism by fire, pitching 3 1/3 innings and giving up four hits, four runs, walking five, and striking out only one. In his second outing against Trinidad State College in Colorado, Mark settled down, starting the game, throwing four innings, giving up four hits and only one run with no walks and no strikeouts leaving the game with a 4-1 lead only to watch his bull pen crumble and getting his chance for his first college victory.

His following start in Borger, Texas against Frank Phillips College, Mark was roughed up again giving up his first home run pitching one and one third innings allowing seven runs. Dodge City ended up losing the game in extra innings 14-13. The Dodge City Conquistadors under new head coach former Chicago Cub/ Wichita State All-American Phil Stephensen are currently 3-15 so far this season. Dodge City is in a rebuilding year as Stephensen took over a team which finished 4-36 last season. Stephensen is the younger brother of Gene Stephensen, head baseball coach at Wichita State University.

"Division I junior college is a lot tougher than high school," he said. "Every player is the best player from their high school. You can't let up one bit."

One thing that makes Mark's accomplishments different is he is a Type-I insulin-dependent diabetic. "All I want kids to know," he said, "is just because you have a handicap doesn't mean you can't succeed. The case is how bad do you really want to succeed."

Merriott found out about his diabetic problem at 15, when he was a high school freshman.

"One day, I felt like I had the flu," he said. "I started feeling really weak."

He missed a week of school and lost 15 pounds. Prior to his condition he was clocked as a freshman pitcher throwing 89 miles per hour in a game against Bennett high school in Bennett, Colo.

"I got so sick, I couldn't keep anything down," he recalls. "Mom and Dad took me to the Boulder Community Hospital. I was so dizzy I could hardly stand up."

Doctors found that he had a blood sugar level of over 800, while normal is under 100. He was rushed to Children's Hospital in Denver, where he almost went into diabetic shock.

Mark went on to become a poster child for the Barbara Davis Center for Children's Diabetes at the University of Colorado.

Not only is he a diabetic; when he was 12, his left thumb was cut off when he accidentally fell into an industrial fan. He was taken to Boulder Community Hospital where the thumb was reattached.

"The first surgery, the doctors reattached my thumb and I wore a cast



**MARK MERRIOTT**, a new Oberlin resident and a starting pitcher for Dodge City Community College, learned a few cooking skills at home. Mark has had to learn how to balance his diet to control his sugar intake to obtain his maximum performance level because he has type I diabetes.

— Herald staff photo by Jim Merriott

on my arm from the middle of June to December," he recalls.

Mark continued playing baseball that summer on a team of 13- and 14-year-olds that traveled Colorado. He switched from batting right-handed to left-handed and led the team in hitting. He played tailback for his seventh-grade football team at Estes Park Middle School, leading the team in rushing and tackling.

He continued managing his diabetes and playing ball through high school and now in college.

"I realize that I have a long way to go and the water is choppy," Mark said of his baseball career. "Anybody can steer a ship in calm waters; it takes a true captain to steer a ship in stormy waters."

Merriott is currently experimenting with an insulin pump that will control his sugar level while he pitches in the game. The pump is a intravenous injection needle that pumps insulin into his blood system using a computerized pump that reads his sugar level. He has worked himself back to throwing into the mid to upper 85-89 miles per hour fastball that he once threw at an earlier age.

"It has taken a lot of sweat for the past four years to build myself back up to where I once was," said Mark. "I will never quit and will give my best."

Only time will tell if he will reach his goal in life, standing on a major-league pitching mound, but there are other things in his life.

"I am majoring in fire science," he said. "I love sports, love to compete, and I have always wanted to be a New York Yankee, but ever since 911, I would give it all up to be a firefighter."

# County discusses phones

The Decatur County commissioners checked into switching cell phones for the county from Alltel to Nex-Tech during their meeting last Tuesday, but didn't make a decision.

Gary Juenemann, the agent in Oberlin for Nex-Tech, brought pamphlets for the commissioners. He said the company is based out of Hays and he is the representative in Oberlin.

Nex-Tech, said Mr. Juenemann, has towers south of town, in Norcat, Allison, Selden and Herndon. He said they are talking about putting in a tower in Kanona, one north of Rexford and another one mile south of U.S. 36 on the Rexford Road.

Mr. Juenemann said for the most part, people have saved money by switching, even if just a little. Most of all they have more minutes and better coverage. He said the minutes roll over and the county can choose a plan.

What about the walkie-talkie feature, asked Undersheriff Randy McHugh. Mr. Juenemann said that is coming.

It would be a benefit for the sheriff's office, fire and ambulance, the undersheriff said.

The commissioners said they would discuss the service.

# Goals meeting planned

A "community conversation" will be held at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, April 6, at the high school cafeteria to get ideas for a 10-year vision statement and goals for Decatur County.

The steering committee will serve a free dinner before the session, which begins at 6:15 p.m.

The idea is to bring the entire community together and talk about the future, said Terry Woodbury, president of Kansas Communities LLC, a consultant guiding the effort.

People will work together to generate ideas for the county, he said. These ideas will be used for a "vision retreat" a month later. Thirty-five people to attend the vision retreat will be nominated at the meeting next week.

Mr. Woodbury said he encourages everyone in the county to attend.

# Council decides second meeting will not be aired on Channel 7

The Oberlin City council agreed that their second meeting of the month will not be aired on local access channel 7 for the next six months.

Councilman Ray Ward said he thinks that if the second meeting isn't televised, that there might be more public involvement. People don't want to come to the meetings and have to talk on the air, he said.

Maybe the second meeting of the month, said Councilman Jay Anderson, should be more of an informational meeting and the council shouldn't take any action. It wouldn't hurt to try it with the second meeting not being aired, he said.

The city council, said Jack Benton, who runs the video equipment, asked the cable channel group to air the meetings. It can be stopped

at any time. Mr. Benton said he can set up and televise a meeting in the downstairs room, too.

Mayor Ken Shobe said they can ask the access channel not to air the meetings to promote more face-to-face interaction between the council and public.

The council gets paid to be here, said Mr. Benton, but he doesn't. If the council wants him to stop airing

the meeting, he can.

Mayor Shobe suggested doing a six-month trial period, with the second meeting of the month still being

open to the public, but not being shown on channel 7. The council will still meet upstairs.

"A big thanks to Jack," said

Mayor Shobe, "for his service to the community in taping and airing the council meetings."

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9	10	11	12 Dr. Frankum General Surgeon Colonoscopies/ EGDs	13 Dr. Reeves Podiatry	14 Dr. Reeves Podiatry	15
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## The Winning Edge Motivational Seminar

by Dick Kelsey

### Topics Include:

Developing a Winning Attitude      Setting Goals that Work  
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Tuesday, April 11, 2006 • 7-9:30 p.m. Gateway Auditorium • Oberlin, Kansas

Tickets are available from the school Superintendent's office or the Oberlin city office. Tickets are on a donation basis with all proceeds going to the reopening of the Sappa Valley Youth Ranch. Suggested minimum donation: \$10. Donations will be taken at the end of the seminar. Seating is limited, thus, tickets will be given out on a first come basis.



### Background of Dick Kelsey

Owner/operator of King's Camp, Inc / King's Achievement Center  
Partner in King's Alcohol and Drug Treatment Centers  
Owns/operates The Red Barn - meeting building/barbecue restaurant  
Worked as a pastor, educator, state wide organizational leader  
Motivational speaker, author of "Winning Ways, Principles of Success for Teens"  
Currently serves as a member of the Kansas House of Representatives  
Married to Doris, 6 children, and 8 grandchildren