

From Under 8 to State

Let's take a journey back in time to the year 2013. Ten years ago in northwest Tampa, two young boys met on a baseball field during tryouts. Justin Allen and Cameron Guise were eventually chosen to play on the same Citrus Park Cal Ripkin Under 8 Select team. That was the instant Justin and Cameron became teammates for the first time. It also marked the



Cameron Guise, Coach Scott, and Justin Allen in 2013

scenario that would unfold on the afternoon of May 24th at Hammond Stadium in Ft. Myers as Sickles faced Viera in the Florida State High School Championship game. In the heart of the starting lineup were the two Citrus Park Select players. They weren't just in the lineup; they were in the heart of the offense. If you were in the stands that day, you would have heard the echoed tones of the P. A. Announcer:

***“Hitting fourth and catching, number 13, Justin Allen . . .
batting fifth, and pitching, number 19, Cameron Guise.”***

beginning of a unique and undeniable friendship between two young boys that would extend to both of their families for more than a decade.

When the boys first met and began playing on the same Under 8 team, no one could have predicted the

Sometimes it takes a village . . .

As a single parent with a career as a medical professional, Kim Bailey had a challenge—balancing being a nurse and raising a young son. It is often said that *it takes a village to raise a child*, and in Kim’s case, she can attest to the value of having a strong family and true friends. Whether it was a holiday gathering, a friendly get together for a Kentucky Derby party or watching football games, Scott and Carrie’s house was the place to be. Kim, Justin, Kim’s mother, Doreen and her husband Fred were usually there. While the adults gathered around the pool and in the family room for drinks and hors d’oeuvres, Cameron and Justin would venture upstairs with their friends and play ping-pong or video games. No matter how much fun they were having, they never missed a meal once it was announced that “dinner is ready.” Perhaps that was one of the reasons those two skinny eight-year-olds (who were born just six months apart) grew to over six-feet tall with not an ounce of fat between them.



When it came to baseball, both Justin and Cameron were fundamentally sound. Early on, they mastered the offensive and defensive skills that would eventually enable them to excel in their age group and stay competitive. They were taught situational baseball, in which their coaches prepared them for just about any situation that might arise on the field. Their “baseball IQs” were exceptional and they learned to suppress their emotions so they could remain in control during games. Academically, they weren’t slouches in the classroom with unweighted GPAs of 3.3 for Justin, and 4.0 for Cameron.



Cameron pitching to Justin in 2018 (left), and in the Florida State High School Championship game 2023.

The road to the State Championship wasn’t easy, and it never is. The fact that the Sickles High baseball team made a run at the title one year ago helped. Making the final four was an experience that shaped the fiber of this year’s team and helped them focus on their goal: ***State Champions - Complete the mission!***

The Championship Game schedule for the afternoon of May 24th stated that the game between Viera and Sickles was to begin at 2:00 pm. The weather gods then had their say. The previous game between Tampa Jesuit and American Heritage was paused for a lightning alert and resumed ninety minutes later. By the time Sickles and Viera took the field, the clock was approaching 4:30.

The game started with Cameron on the mound and Justin behind the plate. Sickles exploded for 3 runs in the first and a single run in the second. Justin Allen drove in two of those runs. By the end of the fifth, Cameron had struck out six batters and had given up two unearned runs.



First pitch of the State Championship Game at Hammond Stadium

The weather gods struck again. With Sickles leading 4 to 2 (which would be the final score of the game), the lightning alert went off and the field was cleared. This time, the ground crew rolled out the tarp because it also started to rain.

Ninety minutes later (an interminable wait when your team is trying to win a championship) a rainbow appeared over the field. With Sickles just two innings and six outs away from their goal, it had to be a good sign.

As the clock approached 9:00 pm, Luke Fikar, who relieved Cameron on the mound, closed out the game, preserving the Championship win for Sickles and Cameron, and assuring that Justin had delivered the game winning RBIs.





Kim, Justin, Carrie, Cameron and Scott

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