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From the major league to Little League



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Steiner Ranch resident Kelly Wunsch pitched for more than five years in Major League Baseball, doing a stint with the Los Angeles Dodgers. At right, Wunsch recently coached his 7-year-old son Fischer in Little League.

Posted Wednesday, July 22, 2009 1:00 pm

Jenn Rains, Hill Country News

Former big league pitcher calls Steiner home

Kelly Wunsch was practically raised at the baseball diamond, playing Little League while his mother was the president and his dad headed up the umpires. He was raised loving baseball, so it's no surprise he grew up to live out any boy's dream - to play in the big leagues.

What is surprising is that he never grew up thinking he'd play baseball in the major league. "I just kept playing because I enjoyed it," Wunsch said. "I was always good at it so I liked it."

A graduate of Houston Bellaire, Wunsch went on to play baseball at Texas A&M University before being drafted in the first round by the Milwaukee Brewers his junior year.

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"From there I ended up playing baseball professionally for 14 years and spent 5.5 years in the big leagues," he said. "It was a great life."

Wunsch, who lives in Steiner Ranch with his wife and two young sons, spent his big league career playing for the Chicago White Sox and the Los Angeles Dodgers before retiring in 2007.

As a situational left-hander, it was only fitting that the Houston-native's first appearance in Major League Baseball came in Texas.

It was opening day in 2000 at the Texas Rangers and Wunsch, a White Sox player at the time, was told he'd get to play.

"I about swallowed my tongue," said Wunsch of getting the signal to warm up. "My heart was going nuts and I was practically sick. I was missing the catcher by 8 feet I was so nervous."

But, as he opened the door and headed across the field to the pitcher's mound, the nerves disappeared. "It was crazy, the transformation. I was totally calm," he said.

His best memory of his time spent in the MLB though has nothing to do with being on the baseball diamond. "We were at the Roxie and I got to do a sing-off with the lead singer of Disturbed," Wunsch said. "It was a packed house. It's the most unique thing I've ever done."

Since retiring, Wunsch helped start a homebuilding company, Russell Kelly Homes, which builds high-end specs and custom homes in Central Texas, mainly in Tarrytown.

He recently got back into baseball, coaching his 7-year-old's Little League team. He also plans to start offering pitching lessons at On Deck Circle in Cedar Park.

A resident of Steiner Ranch since 2005, Wunsch said he has loved the community since he first saw it.

"We were living in College Station at the time. I was playing for the Dodgers. We drove up here on my birthday and two hours later bought a house," he said. "It was probably the easiest sale the realtor ever made," Wunsch joked.

Wunsch said he loves the family-orient and close-knit community of Steiner as well as the fact it's a very active place. "There's always something to do, the schools are great, you have easy access to the lakes. It's a slice of paradise."

Wunsch said the only drawback is not having a baseball league for kids closer to home. He is a part of the Four Points Baseball Association, but without land for a field, a league can't be formed.

"My best memories growing up were at the Little League field," Wunsch said. "That's something I want to do with my kids."

His son played for Town-N-Country this past spring, but Wunsch said the commute makes it difficult. "It's hard to have a personal investment in it because it's so far away."

"Other than that, we have it all covered right here in Steiner Ranch," he said.

Though he does miss his playing days, Wunsch said he's happy just being with his family.

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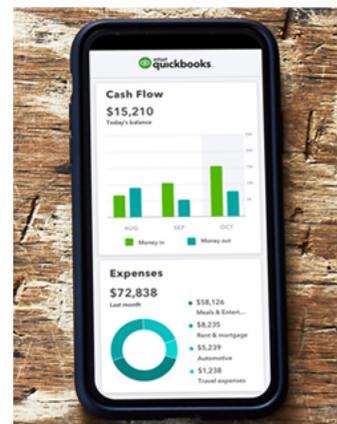
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