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## HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

### Annual 'Brooks' Game Slated For Sunday

By Keith Mills

They stood side by side -- Hall of Famer Eddie Murray and perennial American League All-Star Mark Teixeira -- to help honor some of the best high school baseball players in the state.

"I've been very blessed to play on a world championship team," said Teixeira, in Baltimore this week with the defending World Series champion New York Yankees, "blessed to have All-Star games and Gold Gloves. But what started my entire career was Baltimore baseball, Maryland baseball."

Teixeira, who went to Mount St. Joseph and grew up in Severna Park, playing American Legion baseball for longtime Severna Park coach Jim McCandless, was on hand at the Warehouse at Camden Yards June 9 as the teams were announced for the 29th Brooks Robinson All-Star Game. That contest will be played June 13 after the Orioles take on the New York Mets.

Formally known as the Crown All-Star Game, it features 30 of the premier seniors in the state. The name was changed to the Brooks Robinson Game when Howard County businessman Joe Geier of the Geier Financial Group picked up sponsorship for the event in 2004. Among his many clients in and out of professional baseball are Robinson, Mark Teixeira and Eddie Murray.

"One thing Eddie and Mark have in common is they are always giving back to the community," said Geier, also a graduate of Mount St. Joseph. "That's my challenge to you as baseball players. Give back. Make a difference."

With Robinson unable to attend this year's press conference, Geier asked both Murray and Teixeira to address players, parents and families and hand out the uniforms for Sunday's game.

For Murray, the Orioles' 1977 American League Rookie of the Year and an eight-time All-Star, it was a return to the city where he enjoyed his finest years as a Hall of Fame player.

"It's a big honor to be chosen to play here at Camden Yards, which is a special place," said Murray, a Los Angeles native who spent 13 years with the Orioles and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2003. "For me, it was Candlestick Park in San Francisco. That's where our All-Star game was played and I'll never forget it. I took my first plane ride and got to play with some great players throughout the state of California."

"This is a big deal having Eddie and Mark here," said Dave Norton, who just finished his 28th year as coach at Mount St. Joe and is a member of the Maryland State Association of Baseball Coaches and chairman of the Brooks Robinson Game. "Mark's a special person. He does a lot for us."

Teixeira spent three years on Norton's varsity at Mount St. Joe and closed out his high school career as one of Maryland's most dominant high school players ever. He also closed it out with a home run in the 1998 Crown game, a game Teixeira's North team won, 11-8.

Three years later, he and fellow Mount St. Joe grad Gavin Floyd were picked fourth and fifth in the 2001 major league draft. Both also played in the Crown/Brooks All-Star game as did Mike O'Connor, a 1998 Mount St. Joe grad who pitched in the big leagues two years ago with the Washington Nationals, and shortstop Steve Clevenger, a 1994 Mount St. Joe grad currently playing in the Chicago Cubs farm system.

"I grew up watching Eddie and Cal," said Teixeira, who slammed his ninth home run of this year June 8 as the Yankees beat the Orioles, 12-7. "In fact, Eddie Murray is the reason I became a switch hitter. I can remember sitting in the stands at Memorial Stadium with my father, and it's a close game late. And we're wondering how Eddie was going to win it tonight -- as a lefty or righty."

Murray and Mickey Mantle are considered the two greatest switch hitters ever. Right now, though, a third of the way through his eighth season, Teixeira is ahead of those two legendary sluggers in home runs and RBIs.

In eight seasons with the Yankees, Mantle slugged 249 home runs with 766 RBI. Murray hit 227 home runs with 808 RBI in his first eight years with the Orioles, but lost half the 1981 season because of the strike. Teixeira, in less than seven and a half years has hit 251 home runs with 834 RBI.

But on this day, they were together, symbols of the Orioles' glorious past and an example to the young players of today what is possible from one of their own -- Murray, an Orioles World Series champ in 1983, and Teixeira, who helped the Yankees win the Series last year.

"Look around and ask yourself which one of you will make it," said Murray to the players. "Will it be the guy next to you? The guy across the room? Will any of you make it? Are you willing to outwork the guy next to you? What's it going to take?"

"I'm jealous of you guys," said Teixeira, who was the collegiate player of the year at Georgia Tech before getting drafted in 2001. "Because in the fall, you get to go to college. It will be the best four years of your life. Do not miss the opportunity to get an education. If you get the opportunity to play baseball that's great, but remember it all started here in Maryland."

Once again the entire state is represented on this year's North and South teams in Sunday's Brooks Robinson Game.

#### NORTH TEAM

#### Pitchers

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Dominic Sgroi -- Calvert Hall  
Brad Markey -- C. Milton Wright  
Zach Nadolny -- Bel Air  
Dylan Driscoll -- Urbana

## **Catchers**

Zach Fitzpatrick -- McDonogh  
Matt Hnatiuk -- Loyola

## **Infielders**

Travis Clark -- Hammond  
Mike Draper -- Mount St. Joe  
Pat Fitzgerald -- Calvert Hall  
Tim Gentry -- Dulaney  
Jay Knight -- Linganore

## **Outfielders**

Richard Cruz-Sanchez -- Urbana  
Dominic Fratantouono -- Cardinal Gibbons  
Brody Tennant -- Mount Hebron  
Bryan Willis -- Gilman

## **Coaches**

Phil Rhodes -- Frederick  
Joe Connolly - Fallston  
Ty Whittaker -- Eastern Tech

## **SOUTH TEAM**

### **Pitchers**

Troy Bennett -- Stephen Decatur  
Nick Riley -- Gaithersburg  
Jason Seitler -- Chesapeake (AA)  
Matt Selmer -- Riverdale Baptist

### **Catchers**

Alex Ramsay -- Severna Park  
Austin Richards -- Georgetown Prep

### **Infielders**

Kyle Convissar -- Severna Park  
Michael Marsh -- Chesapeake (AA)  
Kyle Riffe -- DeMatha  
Chris Gaines -- Huntingtown  
Spencer Wolfe -- Huntingtown

### **Outfielders**

Jordan Gowe -- St. Michaels  
Kevin Kean -- Old Mill  
Darrin Smith -- Old Mill  
George Smith -- Good Counsel

### **Coaches**

Jim McCandless -- Severna Park  
Russ Morgan -- Bohemia Manor  
Wes McCoy -- River Hill

\* \* \*

Mount St. Joseph assistant Rod Cameron also announced the players for this year's Team Maryland, which will play in the Heartland Classic (formally the Sun Belt Classic) June 21-26 at the University of Oklahoma in Norman.

Abe Batal -- Riverdale Baptist  
Justin Fratantouono -- Cardinal Gibbons  
A.J. Lardo -- Loyola  
Brandon Glazer -- Clear Spring  
Kyle McKelvey -- St. Michaels  
Adam Parks -- St. Michaels  
Bobby Ruse -- C. Milton Wright  
R.J. Smith -- Catoclin  
Zack Sterling - J.M. Bennett  
Eric Upton -- Dulaney

Dominic Fratantouono, Bennett, Convissar, Draper, Fitzpatrick, Richards, Riley and Selmer will also play for Team Maryland in addition to playing in the Brooks Robinson Game.

*Posted June 10, 2010*