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# MIZZOU

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## Infield Chatter

**Mizzou catcher's communication skills translate to the diamond.**



Catcher Dylan Kelly led Middle Georgia College and the Georgia Collegiate Athletic Association with a .429 batting average before transferring to Mizzou in 2013.

*Story by Marcus Wilkins*

*Photos courtesy of Mizzou Athletics*

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**L**ittle leaguers are often taught to fill baseball's anticipatory defensive moments with babble. As omnipresent as peanuts and

Cracker Jack, choruses of “Hey, batter, batter,” flood fields from coast to coast throughout every American summer.

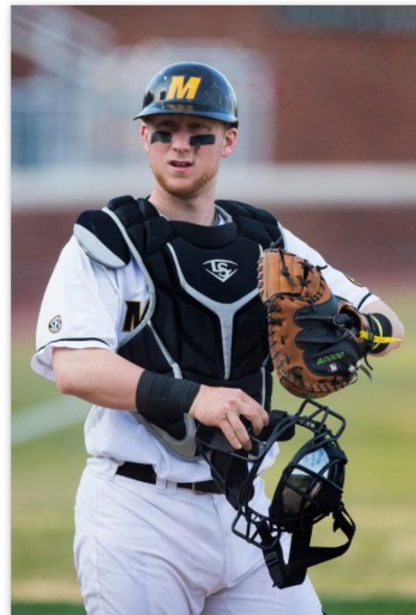
By the time boys become young men and the elite players work their way to collegiate diamonds, the prattling practice peters out. But for Mizzou catcher Dylan Kelly, the chummy chitchat, dugout discussions and positive pitching parleys have never left the game.

“I picked communication as my major because I like talking. We’ll just leave it at that,” says a grinning Kelly, his teammates laughing at the loquacious lefty. “Don’t listen to everything you hear.”

Kelly’s talkative nature has served him well as the Tigers’ backstop. As baseball’s field general, it is the catcher’s responsibility to relay messages to fielders, ensure teammates are cognizant of the count and monitor his pitcher’s performance.

“You have to be the vocal point out there,” Kelly says. “Everybody is watching you. Most of being a catcher is about showing up and being consistent. That’s the most important thing.”

Kelly has been just that for the 2014 Tigers, leading the team with a .330 batting average and .453 slugging percentage.



Kelly, a communication major, lists talking with friends and family among his hobbies.

While growing up in Roswell, Georgia, however, he nearly chose another sport entirely, one not typically associated with the Deep South — ice hockey.

“My old man played in the NHL for a little bit and professionally in Sweden,” Kelly says. “He’s from Michigan, and that’s where I get the blood line.”

Kelly played on a youth hockey team composed of the best players from Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee and the Carolinas. He was a scoring ace and a swift skater, but his Southern roots and left-handed swing steered him from ice to dirt.

This summer, Kelly will try to catch on with a big league organization where he can hone his gifts of gab and glove. After what he hopes is a long and prosperous baseball career, he wants to be a motivational speaker.

“I try to keep everyone upbeat out there,” Kelly says. “I feel that’s what I do well. I try to give everything I’ve got to this university, this team and the guys around me.”

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