

Coste relishing first offseason in bigs

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By Leigh Tobin / Special to MLB.com

At home with ... is a regular Thursday feature of phillies.com.

For Chris Coste, 2006 has been a special year. After more than 11 years of playing independent and Minor League baseball, the 33-year-old's dream of playing Major League Baseball finally came true as a catcher with the Phillies. And because of that, his life has changed in many ways, but a few traditions remain, including his annual trip to West McDonald Lake in Minnesota.

"Going to the lake is something I look forward to at the end of each season," Coste said. "I grew up going to the lake every weekend, and it is one of the things I miss most during the season. At the end of my first season in the Northern League, I had a few broken bats in the back of my car. I was at the lake and had just started a camp fire. I decided to give my broken bats a 'proper burial' by burning them. It started out as a joke and eventually turned into a bit of a ritual.

"The 'bat burning' is something my family and I continue to joke about all the time. This year, in addition to a couple of my own broken bats, I grabbed a few of [Phillie center fielder] Aaron Rowand's to help keep the tradition and the fire going ... although I don't think he is aware of it."

For the first time in about six years, Coste has been able to pass on playing Winter Ball and is spending the offseason with his family.

"I was able to celebrate Thanksgiving with my family," he said. "It was nice, but I didn't know which direction to go. There were too many options. Everyone wanted us to come by.

"But being home was strange at first ... I was lazy for the first month," the Fargo, N.D., native confessed. "I am in a routine now, though, and working out."

A typical day for the catcher/first baseman consists of dropping his daughter, Casey, off at school, going to the gym to work out, followed by a little work on his book. He then picks up Casey from school, does some "family stuff" and a little more work on his book before heading to bed.

The book Chris is working on will be his second. This one is on his life and the struggle to get to the Major Leagues. At the start of this season, he claimed, "It's 95 percent written. I just need a conclusion." His plans for the book were mentioned in a New York Times story late in the season and since then, he has gotten numerous phone calls and inquiries, which were taking up much of his time.

"So, I hired a literary agent to help," he said.

Chris published the last book himself. This time, "I'm 99 percent sure it will be published by an actual trade publisher," he said. "So I am spending my time writing proposals for the publishers ... and they need chapter summaries and the first two chapters of the book. I think I've made 10 drafts of the summary already."

If the book does get published by an actual trade publisher, the production will take longer, so don't look for the book prior to the start of the 2007 season.

You may not see the book yet, but you will be able to see Coste in Philadelphia this winter, as he will be joining the Phillies on their annual Winter Tour in January.

"This is my first big-league offseason," he said with enthusiasm. "I'm usually going to the caravan [to see the players].

"This winter has been busy, but it's a lot better than Winter Ball when I would wake up every morning stiff and sore and wish I was home."

This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.