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Brothers create a special league

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WAKE FOREST - Nobody strikes out in Dream League baseball. There are no outs. No double plays. No goats.

For Victor Savage, it will be a thrill enough just to be part of a team, wear his own uniform and see his own number on the back. At age 10, Victor is the youngest of four crew-cutted brothers, all of them rabid athletes. But multiple disabilities including hemiparesis -- partial paralysis on the right side of his body -- have kept Victor from playing alongside his brothers.

That got twin brothers Maurice and Nicholas Savage thinking: Let's start a new league for kids with special needs and give Victor a place to play.

They took their idea to Town Hall, combed churches and youth groups for players, and now the Wake Forest Dream League has its opening day on April 26.

Watch out, right fielders. Victor bats lefty.

"He'll be running the bases, feeling a little more like his brothers," said Diane Savage, his mother.

The Savage twins, age 15 and students at Wake-Forest Rolesville High School, came with their family from New Jersey in the summer of 2006.

Up north, they said, Victor had a league with six or seven teams. But the closest thing they had in the Triangle played in Cary -- too far to drive every weekend with four kids.

So the twins went to Ed Austin, Wake Forest's athletic coordinator.

The town tried a similar league about 15 years ago, Austin said, but it couldn't round up enough players.

But with population more than doubling since 1990, the town attracted about 15 players -- enough for two teams.

"I did meet one young lady who is in a wheelchair," Austin said. "It made me very happy. As she was leaving, she thanked me over and over. I'd love to take credit, but the idea was not mine."

Registration has officially closed, Austin said, but the town will still put players on a waiting list as there's plenty of room to play. Please hurry, though.

Children age 5 to 15 are eligible, he said, and they don't have to live in Wake Forest. It just costs nonresidents \$80 rather than the \$40 for townfolk.

The town has pitched in its own equipment and will buy more if needed, and there are plenty of



Victor Savage, left, plays with his brothers Michael, 13, Maurice, 15, and Nicholas, 15. The older brothers, Nicholas and Maurice, are starting the Wake Forest Dream League, a new baseball league for disabled children.
Staff Photos by Takaaki Iwabu

volunteer "buddies" to help the players, though more are always needed -- supplies, too. The Savage kids' mother suggested maybe a tent or awning that wheelchair-bound players could sit under if they couldn't get into the dugout.

Victor and the rest of the players will either be Mudcats or Bulls, a nod to the Triangle's two minor league clubs.

Either way, Victor will have his own team and his own cheering crowd -- three proud brothers among them.

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