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Stock keeps rising for Westlake's Dykstra, with a boost from his famous dad

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Those willing to fork out gobs of cash these days to Lenny Dykstra for his stock market advice get a free tip all this week.

But it's specific to any Major League Baseball team on the fence about selecting his 18-year-old son, Cutter, off Westlake High's squad in today's annual first-year player draft.

"If you like money and want to win and want to put people in the seats, then Cutter's the right guy," the former All-Star center fielder known as "Nails" for the New York Mets and Philadelphia Phillies said about nailing the investment potential of his kid as a shortstop-turned-center fielder who ended up breaking his nose and taking 11 stitches after plowing into a fence about a month ago.

"He's still so green, but a lot of scouts think he's got a high ceiling, because it's all about his desire and heart - and he's got plenty of that. It's very easy to project him as a big-leaguer."

Some baseball insiders project the 6-foot, 180-

pound Cutter Dykstra as a first-round selection. After a senior season in which he hit .473 in 29 games (44 for 93) with five home runs, 18 RBIs, 21 walks, a .742 slugging percentage, 1.320 OPS and 10 stolen bases in 14 attempts, it's been in the tryout camps where the attention has really turned up a notch.

Monday, he was at Dodger Stadium taking cuts for Logan White, the Dodgers' assistant GM for scouting. Tuesday, it was a flight out to Phoenix to work out for the Arizona Diamondbacks.

All of this while juggling a schedule of finals at Westlake.

"Luckily, I've had the finals in the morning," Cutter said. "I've have missed a few days of school, but the teachers are cool with it."

Lenny was with him at Dodger Stadium on Monday.

"Tommy Lasorda was there and he told me, 'He's better than you,'" Lenny said. "That's true, he is. He really busted his ass."

Not so long ago, it was the dad who was trying to convince the son to stick to golf. Living along the Sherwood Country Club track in Thousand Oaks, Cutter Dykstra had developed a five handicap (to his dad's 10) as an eighth-grader and was regularly driving the ball 250-yards-plus.

But how long can you keep a bloodied-up Dykstra away from a baseball diamond?

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Lenny, a 13th-round draft pick out of Garden Grove High in 1981 after a senior year in which he hit over .500 and didn't strike out once, kept a safe distance huddled in his car with his laptop while watching Cutter's games the past few seasons. Back home, they'd go over his performance.

"(Cutter's) preparation was very meticulous, very savvy," said Westlake coach Zach Miller, who says he'll follow today's draft on his laptop while teaching his English class at Los Cerritos Middle School. "He really led by example. He swings the wood bat real well. He comes to work every single day, practices hard, plays hard. There are no peaks and valleys to his game.

"Not one time did he play off his name or take things for granted because of his dad. There's no doubt in my mind he's a professional baseball player."

Cutter, who some have also projected as a second-base candidate, has given a verbal commitment to UCLA if something strange occurs in the draft. While older brother Gavin played some college ball at Cal State Northridge, it's doubtful Cutter will even have to consider the Bruins as a backup choice.

"Being selfish, I'd love to have him close to home," says Cutter's mother, Terri. "But I want whatever's best for him, and whatever he wants is what I want, too."

What Cutter wants is to uphold the family name - and the mentality of all-out hustle that goes

with it.

"I want to play the game like my dad did, and like it when people say I remind them of him," Cutter said. "There's no pressure. I want to entertain people who watch me play, just like my dad. I want to carry the tradition. I embrace the name.

"My dad has helped me as much as he can. Without him, I wouldn't be the player that I am. All the hard work has paid off, and I'm going to keep playing hard. All I know is I've done all I can and showed what I can do. I'm confident."

Lenny, whose 13-year career ended in 1996, was able to take Cutter with him to some spring training camps. These days, he's buried in stock reports as he writes for Jim "Mad Money" Cramer's Web site, runs several businesses - including a car wash in SimiValley - and pushes the new Players Club magazine devoted to pro athletes.

He wants to believe the rumors he's heard from scouts that his old team, the Mets, have Cutter in their crosshairs as their sandwich pick between the first and second rounds.

"Think about how'd that work from a marketing standpoint," Lenny said. "But I know Cutter would love to play anywhere. He knows about the grind, that nothing comes for free. He knows nothing was ever given to me. I've left pieces of my body spread all over the National League. And now I get to drive through these pearly gates (at Sherwood) and live in the Gretzky compound that

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was built for royalty.

"He knows what winning and losing means. He's all about old-school mentality.

"Listen, if Cutter wasn't good enough for the draft, then I'd say that too. No bull(bleep). It's all about reality. Reality is putting yourself into a position to be drafted. He's done that. If it's not reality, then it's just eyewash."

The reality about his name, too, must be revealed.

Cutter might be the phrase given to an off-speed fastball, but the Dykstras discovered and embraced it after seeing a character with that name on a TV movie they were watching one night.

"I don't remember the name of the movie," Lenny says, "but the dude was very debonair, a smooth operator ... a guy who ended up with the prize."

Gerry Gittleson contributed.