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Clovis West pitcher J.D. Salles, right, has given an oral to commitment to play baseball for Fresno State, where his father John Salles, left, also played.

Salles follows father to 'Dogs

Fresno State lands Clovis West baseball star.

By **Andy Boogaard / The Fresno Bee**

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Twenty years after his father completed one of the most distinguished pitching careers in Fresno State history, Clovis West High's J.D. Salles has made an oral commitment to play for the Bulldogs.

"My heart has been with Fresno State forever because of my dad," Salles said in reference to John Salles, a Bulldogs Hall of Famer whose 32 career wins from 1986-88 remain third in school history.

J.D. Salles, as a junior pitcher/shortstop this season, went 13-0 with an 0.80 ERA on the mound while also hitting .420 in one of the most overpowering years in Central Section annals.

The Bee's co-Player of the Year said he also had been offered scholarships by Cal Poly and University of the Pacific, had talked often with Nebraska and was receiving interest from Cal.

"I was kind of looking at other schools," he said, "but my heart was always with the Bulldogs and I had no reason to leave. It was pretty much an easy decision. They are the best team in the nation."

His announcement came 10 days after Fresno State defeated Georgia 6-1 in Omaha, Neb., for the championship of the College World Series.

MORE INFORMATION

All in the family

ABOUT THE DAD, JOHN SALLES

* Bee All-Metro Player of the Year at McLane High in 1985.

* Played at Fresno State from 1986-88.

* On Bulldogs single-season chart, first in starts (23) and innings (177 1/3), third in complete games (15), fifth in wins (15) and 10th in strikeouts (152).

* On Bulldogs career chart, second in complete games (33), third in wins (32) and innings (430), and sixth in strikeouts (338).

* On NCAA single-season chart, second in starts (23) and third in innings (177 1/3).

* American Baseball Coaches Association All-American at Fresno State in 1988.

* Selected in fifth round of major league amateur draft by Chicago Cubs in 1988.

"Hopefully, they'll go back to the series in the next few years," said John Salles, who won 15 games while setting school records for starts (23) and innings (177 1/3) in an All-America season that closed in the CWS in 1988.

"J.D. made the decision to stay at home and I think it was a wise one," the father said. "It's always easier to play coming out of your own house and bed, where you're taken care of.

"When I started out with him, I was just hoping he would play and enjoy the game. If he had the ability to go to the next level, that was a bonus. I hope he has my success [at Fresno State] and more. I can't wait to see him play."

What position his son plays for the Bulldogs won't be determined until he begins his college career in the spring of 2010.

Pitcher Justin Wilson (Buchanan) and first baseman Alan Ahmady (Clovis West) are examples of local players who established themselves at one position after arriving at Fresno State as multiposition stars. And Wilson (9-5) and Ahmady (.382, 13 home runs, 92 RBIs) played pivotal roles in the Bulldogs' NCAA title.

John and J.D. Salles said they discussed the options this week with Fresno State coach Mike Batesole, who's prohibited by NCAA rules from commenting on the player until he signs his official letter of intent in November.

"Batesole said it's pretty much up to me," J.D. said. "He said he recruited Ahmady as a pitcher and Wilson as a hitter, and look what happened to them. My heart's in both, but I love pitching, and I can't imagine not doing that. It was fun watching those guys hit in Omaha, though. I'm up for anything Batesole wants."

J.D. Salles mirrors his father both in low-firing mechanics and unyielding approach to hitters. The son is 6 feet, 185 pounds. Dad entered Fresno State as 5-11, 185 and left as a fifth-round draft choice of the Chicago Cubs at 6-0, 205.

"Coach Batesole looks for smart, aggressive and tough kids, and that's what he's getting with J.D.," Clovis West coach Kevin Patrick said.

Batesole came to Fresno State from Cal State-Northridge, where Patrick played for him as an infielder from 1998-99 before assisting him in 2000.

"J.D. will be a great addition for Batesole," Patrick said. "Obviously, coming off the College World Series, it doesn't get any better than this."

The commitment from Salles is the latest from some of the Valley's premier players.

Among those arriving this fall will be Fowler pitcher Josh Poytress, The Bee's 2007 Player of the Year, and Centennial center fielder Dustin Robinson, who powered the Golden Hawks to a 55-11 record and a section title in the past two years.

And having just completed his freshman season for the Bulldogs was Trent Soares, a Bee All-Star outfielder from Memorial whose father, Todd, played for Fresno State in 1982-84.

The reporter can be reached at aboogaard@fresnobee.com or (559) 441-6336.

* Inducted into Fresno State Hall of Fame in 1996.

ABOUT THE SON, J.D. SALLES

* Goes 8-0 with 0.80 ERA and 57 strikeouts in 44 innings for Clovis West as co-Player of the Year in Tri-River Athletic Conference as a junior in 2008.

* Goes 13-0 overall, striking out 93 in 70 innings, and hits .420 with 28 runs, four home runs, 18 RBIs and 12 steals as Golden Eagles leadoff hitter and Bee co-Player of the Year in 2008.

* Only five players in Central Section history have won more than 13 games while going unbeaten in a season.

* Makes oral commitment to play baseball at Fresno State.

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