

By JOHN HENSON

Harlan County Schools

Braxton Fields helped build a winning program as a high school shortstop.

He hopes to help maintain a winning program on the college level.

Fields, Harlan County High School's standout shortstop, will continue his baseball career at Georgetown College. He signed with the central Kentucky school Monday in ceremonies at HCHS.

Georgetown, a member of the Mid South Conference, is currently 21st in the nation in the NAIA poll and has a record of 32-7.

"They have a great baseball program, and I loved the campus there," Fields said.

Assistant coach Josh Franklin said Fields has a chance to move into the starting lineup as a freshman at second base and could eventually land back at shortstop.

"Braxton is a great kid overall. He's very good athletically, very good academically and great socially,"

Franklin said. "He's the exact type of player we look for at Georgetown. He has great character and is going to be a leader in our program."

Fields is the last link to the proud baseball program at Cumberland High School. As an eighth grader, Fields was the shortstop for the Redskins in 2008 before consolidation brought together Cumberland, Cawood and Everts high schools.

Harlan County coach John Lewis was starting catcher on four regional championship teams at Cumberland in the 1980s and knew when he took over as the HCHS coach that Fields would be a key player in building a winner at the new school.

"Braxton was a freshman when we opened the school and you want key players like Braxton to set an example as far as character and the game," Lewis said. "It's a great day for him and it will good for Georgetown. He brought a lot to our program for four years, and he's getting ready to bring a lot to them for four years. He has been huge for this program in the example he set for the other kids as far as work ethic. He's one of the biggest reasons the program is being built the way it is. He's a role model for the others."

Fields is off to a good start as a senior and has helped the Bears race out of the gate at 11-2 heading into a district matchup Monday against Bell County. The Bears have improved from eight wins to 14 to 21 over the first three years of the program, and Fields is confident his team can take the next step this spring.

"I feel this is the team we can win a region with. This is the best team we've had," Fields said. "We're working well together."

Like the Bears, Fields also improved each season. He played summer baseball and was one of several HCHS players who spent their winters working hard in the weight room to get bigger and stronger.

"Summer ball has been important and lifting weights during the offseason also helped my progression," Fields said.

Fields leads the Bears this season with a .486 average that includes 17 hits in 35 at bats. He's also first in runs scored with 20 and second behind Tyler Boggs in RBI with 15. Fields homered in a win over Sullivan North, Tenn., and also has five doubles and a team-high 10 stolen bases.

