

# LI's Maron moving up

■ **Sterling Award winner** making a name in minors

BY DAVID LENNON  
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When Cam Maron got his call-up to Citi Field last month, it wasn't to be a fill-in behind the plate for Josh Thole. That day may come eventually, but for now, Maron was happy to settle for the next best thing: the honor of receiving a Sterling Award as the Mets' top player at the Rookie League affiliate in Kingsport, Tenn.

Maron, a Hicksville High graduate and Newsday first-team All-Long Island catcher, was among 10 organizational MVPs honored on Sept. 14, a group that also included 2010 first-round pick Matt Harvey. But only Maron is a truly home-grown prospect, one that spent his childhood going to games at Shea Stadium and idolizing Mike Piazza, so that took the experience to another level.

"There were a lot of emotions running at a function like that, an awards ceremony of that magnitude," Maron said by



Cam Maron, 20, who starred at Hicksville, took part in on-field drills last month at Citi Field after receiving his Sterling Award.

FILE PHOTO BY BRUCE ADLER

phone from Fort Myers, Fla., where he is playing in the instructional league. "I think growing up watching the Mets really kind of added more to it.

"I didn't come to Citi Field as a kid obviously — it was to

Shea. But coming to Queens and being in that area again, it was kind of like, now I'm there. I'm starting to get there. I'm not that fan anymore, that kid. It was just an honor to be named in that

class, among those guys."

Maron has a few more rungs of the organization ladder to climb before getting a shot to play at Citi Field, but the Sterling winners dressed in the clubhouse with the rest of the team and took part in some on-field drills before the awards ceremony. In addition to the trophies, they also received plenty of good-natured harassment during the pregame stretch, which served as a comical "welcome" to the majors.

"You definitely feel there's a camaraderie there," said Maron, who was picked in the 34th round of the 2009 draft. "Obviously I've got a lot of work to do before I get to the big leagues, but it's definitely a step in that direction. Being there around the big leaguers, and seeing how they work before the game, and being in the clubhouse, kind of gives you that little cup of coffee so to speak. You feel like you get closer to that."

Maron played 32 games combined in his first two seasons for the Gulf Coast League Mets, a lower-level Rookie League affiliate, but opened

some eyes this season once he was elevated to Kingsport. Maron, 20, finished second in the Appalachian League with a .434 on-base percentage and tied for the team lead with a .318 batting average in 58 games. Maron had three home runs and 24 RBIs before earning a late-season promotion to Class A Savannah.

"This was kind of an, OK, I belong here sort of year," he said. "To start to make a name for myself and start to have some people notice what's going on. It's definitely a vote of confidence and makes you feel good that all the hard work you put in is starting to pay off."

After wrapping up the instructional league this weekend, Maron will return to Long Island, where he plans to continue his offseason workouts with Joe Francisco at the Performance Factory in Farmingdale as well as the Professional Athletic Performance Center in Garden City — alongside Jose Reyes and other local players.

"That's a big thing to be able to be there with those guys," Maron said. "You don't want to finish last in any of those drills."

# Mets cut next year's ticket prices

BY DAVID LENNON  
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After a second consecutive year of declining attendance at Citi Field, the Mets revealed a "rescaled" ticket plan yesterday for 2012, a program that includes lowered prices for season-ticket holders and "dynamic pricing" for single-game sales.

The Mets saw an attendance drop of 8 percent in 2011, a loss of 207,142 from the previous season. That wasn't nearly as steep as the 19.2 percent plunge in 2010, a difference of 608,833 from Citi Field's inaugural season, when the Mets drew over 3 million.

With the new plan, the Mets announced that 80 percent of seats will have a reduction of about 5 percent or greater for season-ticket holders and 18 percent will have a drop of 30 percent or more.

"We've just been adjusting to all of the market forces and factors," said Dave Howard, the Mets executive vice president of business operations. "We've always prided ourselves on being accessible and affordable. Now we're even more accessible and affordable."

The biggest reflection of that is the team's new pricing system. The face value of single-game tickets will be offered in March, but the Mets said those prices "will be adjusted on a real-time basis, either upward or downward, based on market demand."

The Mets will keep the same tier-pricing standards, but those can fluctuate, and the seats in the season-ticket holder areas will not fall below the already discounted prices previously purchased by season-ticket holders. That will still allow those people to resell their tickets on the sec-

ondary market, if desired.

"We'll see what happens in the marketplace," Howard said.

With the ownership group still facing a \$1-billion lawsuit from Madoff trustee Irving Picard, the team's attendance woes of the past two seasons have further damaged the Mets as they aim to field a competitive team. The best way to get more people in the ballpark is to win games, and the Mets missed the playoffs for the fifth consecutive season. They also have finished below .500 the past three years.

"I think we were in a somewhat unfortunate circumstance opening up a new ballpark during the worst economic recession since the Great Depression," Howard said. "And obviously the team's performance has been disappointing over the last seasons. Those are the principal factors for it."

## 2012 ticket changes

- The majority of season-ticket holders will pay less for their seats.
- **80 percent** of seats will have a reduction of approximately **5 percent** or more.
- **57 percent** of seats will have a reduction of 10 percent or greater.
- **35 percent** will have a cut of **20 percent** or more.
- **18 percent** will have a drop of **30 percent** or more.
- More than 15,000 seats will cost less than **\$25** per game.
- The Mets will hold their first "Select-A-Seat" event Thursday, Nov. 17 through Saturday, Nov. 19 at Citi Field, providing season-ticket holders with the opportunity to upgrade their locations based on seniority.
- The Mets will introduce a limited number of full-season tickets for only **\$12 per seat** per game, or **\$972** for the entire season. The limit is six seats per account.

■ "Dynamic pricing" for single-game tickets. The face value of single-game tickets will initially be offered in March at prices at or below 2011 prices. As time progresses, those prices may be adjusted on a real-time basis, either up or down, based on market demand.

