

WEST PENN BASEBALL PROSPECTS

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Contact Info

WEST PENN BASEBALL PROSPECTS is published by West Penn Baseball Prospects, Inc. Any correspondence should be directed to Tony Villiotti at: wpabaseball@hotmail.com or 63 Stancey Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15220

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Website:

WEST PENN BASEBALL PROSPECTS' website address is www.wpabaseball.com. Please visit and tell me what you would like to see added to the site. Back issues can be downloaded from the website.

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We greatly appreciate the very generous donation made to West Penn Baseball Prospects, Inc. by the law firm of Kirkpatrick Lockhart Nicholson Graham LLP.

2006 All-Star Weekend

The WPIAL Baseball Coaches Association (WBCA) continues to plan for their 3rd annual All-Star Weekend. This year's weekend is scheduled to take place on June 9 and 10.

An Awards Banquet will be held on the evening of June 9 followed by an Underclassmen Showcase the morning of June 10 and an All-Star Doubleheader later that day. Both the Showcase and the Doubleheader will be conducted at Washington & Jefferson's Ross Memorial Park.

The Awards Banquet is open to the public and will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn at Southpointe. The Banquet honors the players and coaches selected to participate in the All-Star Doubleheader and the Players and Coaches of the Year as selected by the WBCA. More information on the Banquet will be provided later.

Last year's inaugural Underclassmen Showcase was attended by coaches from more than 60 colleges and 15 professional teams. The specifics related to this year's Showcase are still being worked out, but it is expected that fewer players will be featured to ensure that all participants have a chance to show all their skills. Registration for the Showcase is expected to begin in April and more details will be provided as we get closer to the Showcase.

The highlight of the weekend is the All-Star doubleheader that features the top seniors in the WPIAL. The

doubleheader matches Class AAAA vs. AAA and Class AA vs. Class A. Participants will be selected in mid-May by the WBCA. The rain date for this year's doubleheader is June 11.

Early Commitments

A number local players made their college decisions during the November early signing period. Included in this group are **Harry Austin** (North Allegheny; Elon), **Paul Bugajski** (Norwin; Duquesne), **Jesse D'Amico** (Mohawk; Cincinnati), **Jack Greenberg** (Upper St. Clair; Rhode Island); **James Hoover** (Elizabeth-Forward; Niagara), **John Karr** (Pine-Richland; Penn State), **Geoff Lang** (North Allegheny; Maryland - Baltimore County), **Tyler Marburger** (Blackhawk; Northern Iowa), **Kris McDonough** (Upper St. Clair - Ohio University), **Mike Ritson** (Woodland Hills; Winthrop), **Jake Rougeaux** (Indiana; IUP), **Pat Slowey** (Upper St. Clair; Winthrop); **Christian Valeriano** (Riverside; Lehigh) and **Mark Woleslagle** (Norwin; Lehigh).

More Commitments

Since the early signing period, a handful of others have made decisions. The latest group includes **Tom Carter** (Shaler; Cleveland State), **Tim Kearney** (Neshannock; Maryland) and **Vince Lloyd** (Beaver Falls; Slippery Rock). Check the headlines section of our home page for the latest in commitment information as well as other current news items.

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A Parent's Advice

We are always happy to pass along the comments of others regarding the recruiting process, whether it's from coaches or players and parents who have gone through the process. We recently heard from a parent, who wishes to remain anonymous, about his son's recent experiences. His son is a high school senior who is a very good athletic prospect and also has very strong grades and test scores.

This parent opened by saying "My son is a senior in high school and I know that certain college coaches have contacted him as a direct result of your newsletter. He is being recruited by over 25 D-3 schools and a handful of D-1. The D-3 schools are offering academic scholarships that are significantly more than the athletic scholarships offered by D-1. Accordingly, he will probably end up at D-3."

His son attended three major showcases this past summer but the comments made by the coaches and organizers at the best known showcase were particularly interesting. This parent's observation was "grades and SATs are more important than your baseball abilities." Every player attending the showcase was required to provide their SAT scores and GPA along with other biographical information

Every college coach in attendance was provided a camp roster that included the players biographical information and, in large bold letters, their GPA and SAT scores.

This parent shared with us that the keynote speaker at the opening night dinner told the camp attendees and the parents that grades and especially SATs are most important. The speaker said "if you don't have 1050 SAT scores with at least 500 on each section, you are not going to get recruited by any of the coaches here." It is important to note that this wasn't a gathering of Ivy League coaches. The coaches represented the SEC, the Big East and other major and minor

conferences. The coach from a Virginia college took the podium and showed the audience his camp roster. On his roster were a number of names that were blacked out. Keep in mind that the names were blacked out before the camp started and therefore the coach had no idea of the talent level of the kids he had blacked out.

He asked the audience "Do any of you want to know why certain names are crossed off?" He then answered his own question, "These are kids with inadequate SAT scores. I don't care how good these kids are, I am not recruiting them. Players, I am telling you that all of us up on this podium recruit nationally and there are a lot of good players out there and if I have to decide I am going, and my fellow coaches on this podium will agree, to recruit the kid with the solid SAT and GPA."

The importance of academics was a consistent theme in other showcases the player attended. This parent had the opportunity to talk at length with a number of coaches from various schools and they all said the same thing. As the parent told us "The baseball coaches do not want to go to the admissions people with a sub-par student, it is not worth the aggravation. The admissions office has the final say of who gets admitted, not the coach. Getting on the coaches list helps, but it is not a guarantee of admission."

The parent concluded by telling us, "Kids need to know that there is a lot of baseball talent out there that have the grades and strong SATs. If you want to get serious looks they better take care of the academics first."

Local College Players in Baseball America

A couple of local players received notice in a recent issue of Baseball America. **Nathan Nery** of Moon was named the #4 draft prospect in the Atlantic Sun Conference. **Blake Lalli** of Pine-Richland was named to the pre-season All-Conference team in the same conference and **Dom Duggan** of Seneca Valley was named pre-season All-Conference in the Big South.

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Recruiting Advice

I had the pleasure of attending the 2006 Pennsylvania Coaches Clinic in Monroeville, PA on January 13 and 14. One of the sessions of particular interest to me was “Facts About Recruiting the High School Athlete” which was conducted by John Stuper, head baseball coach at Yale, and Jim Toman, associate head coach at South Carolina. Both coaches have local ties, with Stuper coming from Butler and Toman from Gateway High School.

I had a chance to speak with both coaches after their session and they gave me permission to summarize their remarks in this newsletter. Please bear in mind that the session was aimed at high school coaches, not players, so their remarks were slanted in that direction.

The highlights of their comments are as follows:

- While coaches encourage players and coaches to send videos, it is imperative that the coaches see the players in person. Coaches typically won't recruit a player strictly from a video, but will use the video to identify prospects.
- Getting seen by college scouts is important, but can be expensive. Coaches do go to showcases (the East Coast Professional Showcase was specifically mentioned as a good one) but they can't be everywhere. One solution is for the players to attend camps at the colleges they are hoping to attend. This, of course, is only feasible if the player is considering a small number of schools.
- Coaches should help the player to be realistic. Stuper and Toman both stressed the importance of attending a college where a player is going to play. Everybody wants to play Division I but it is far better to play at Division III than to sit on the bench in Division I.
- In discussing realistic expectations, Coach Toman mentioned the issues in recruiting out-of-state players. Tuition is typically cheaper for in-state students and there are often non-athletic grants available to students who remain in their state. Given the budgetary constraints the colleges face, it is much more cost-effective to recruit in-state players. A 50% scholarship to an in-state player is much less costly than a 50% scholarship to an out-of-state player.
- High school coaches were encouraged to be honest in their evaluation. It does not help to overrate a player and it hurts a coach's credibility with future players.
- The coaches did say it was helpful for a coach who has sent other players on to college baseball to compare the prospect to past college players.
- Put the responsibility on the college coach to make the evaluation. It is rare that a college coach will make a decision strictly off the evaluation of his high school coach.
- Coaches don't want to deal with academic problems. It is important to have good grades and have a good attendance record. For many colleges it is difficult to get a player into the program if the GPA is less than 3.0 and SATS are less than 1000 (old SATs).

2007 WPIAL Baseball Classification Changes

Classification changes for the 2007 baseball season were recently announced. Peters Township and Pine-Richland will move from AAA to AAAA. Steel Valley will move from AA to AAA. Jeannette and Canevin will move from A to AA. Trinity and Uniontown will move from AAAA to AAA. Ellwood City will move from AAA to AA. Laurel will move from AA to A.

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Spring Trips

It is becoming increasingly common for local high schools to head South for warmer weather in preparation for the local high school season. We asked local high school coaches to let us know where their spring trips will be taking them this year and following is the information we received.

Bethel Park

Where: Charleston, SC
When: March 28 - April 1

Elizabeth-Forward

Where: Gaffney, SC
When: March 23- 27

Hempfield

Where: Winchester, VA
When: March 31- April 2

Mars

Where: Columbia, SC
When: March 22-26

Mohawk

Where: Mt. Vernon, VA & Rock Hill, SC
When: March 22-24

Montour

Where: Disney World Sports Complex
When: March 24-28

North Allegheny

Where: Rock Hill, SC
When: April 10-15

North Hills

Where: Disney World Sports Complex
When: March 30 - April 3

Our Lady of Sacred Heart

Where: Cocoa Beach, FL
When: March 27-31

Peters Township

Where: Sumter/Columbia SC
When: March 23-25

Plum

Where: Cocoa Beach, FL
When: March 30-April 1

Ringgold

Where: Disney World Sports Complex
When: March 22-25

Shady Side Academy

Where: Orlando, FL
When: March 20-29

Trinity

Where: Sumter/Columbia, SC
When: March 23-25

Important WPIAL Dates

March 6	First practice
March 11	First scrimmage
April 3	First section games
May 10	Last section games
May 17	Playoffs begin
May 30/31	WPIAL championships
June 5	PIAA Playoffs begin
June 16	PIAA championships

Section 7 vs. Section 10 All-Star Game

The second annual All-Star game featuring the WPIAL All-Star (Section 7) and Erie area All-Stars (Section 10) will be played this year on June 17 at Jerry Uht Park in Erie. Last year's inaugural game was won by Section 10. The WPIAL All-Stars will be selected in late May. More details on this will be provided later.

SENIORS!!!

Please let us know when you make your college choice so we can report it on our headlines and let college coaches know.

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Coaching Changes

There have been a number of coaching changes at WPIAL schools this off-season. The ones we are aware are listed below. Please let us know if we've missed any.

Belle Vernon	Dan Palm
Butler	Dave Florie
Central Catholic	Rich Krivanek
Chartiers Valley	Jim Jaskowski
Elderton	Ray Blystone
Elizabeth-Forward	Frank Champ
Ellwood City	Erik Montozzi
Frazier	John Phillips
Gateway	Jerry DalCanton
Kiski	Zach Jankowski
McKeesport	Ken Trusky
Montour	Glen Vietmeier
New Brighton	Don Mittner
North Catholic	Pat Fabian
Pine-Richland	Kurt Wolfe
South Side Beaver	Chip Hunter
Springdale	Dan Pschirer
Steel Valley	Ryan Ellis
Valley	Brandon Turley
Vincentian	Andy Maddix
Western Beaver	Ron Thellman
Woodland Hills	James Barton

Ideas for Articles?

If you have any ideas for articles be sure to let us know. Just email any ideas you may have to wpabaseball@hotmail.com.

Prospect Updates

Please remember that we update our list of prospects and their short bios at the end of every month except June and July. You can access the updated prospect information through our website at www.wpabaseball.com. We are always anxious to update the information on prospect so please keep us advised of your accomplishments, growth spurts, test scores and grades. The more info we can provide to college coaches about you, the more help we can be.

Using our Website

We strongly encourage everyone to checkout our website (www.wpabaseball.com) on a regular basis. I'm not going to go into detail on every feature of the website but I did want to comment on a few features.

The bottom of the home page includes a "Headlines" feature that shows the latest player commitments along with any other relevant baseball news. Check it out frequently to see what's going on in local baseball.

The "Online Prospect Data Base" section of the website is the most used feature. That section includes a listing of local prospects as well as brief bios on each players listed. We update this section at each month-end based on new information received from high school coaches and others.

Another popular feature is the "Where Are They Now" section that allows you keep track of local players who have gone on to play college or professional baseball. We update this section periodically as college and professional rosters are updated.

We have been disappointed in the low amount of usage of our "Message Boards". We had hoped this would be a feature that would enable players and others to exchange information and opinions about their showcase and recruiting experiences. We also thought that this would be an excellent venue for players and coaches to ask us questions.

We are always interested in hearing suggestions as to how to make the website more useful to players and coaches. Please pass along any ideas or questions that you may have. We may not be able to implement the suggestions we receive for financial reasons, but we are always anxious to hear what you have to say.