

AUGUST ISSUE CONTENTS

- **Important Recruiting Dates**
- **Additions to CPOA**
- **NCAA News**
- **CPOA PA Topic of the Month**
- **Contact Sheets**
- **Internet Updates**
- **Referral Program**
- **Season End Updates**
- **Monthly Meetings**
- **Seminars**

IMPORTANT AUGUST RECRUITING DATES

8-1: Field Hockey, Soccer and Men's Water Polo final signing date for the National Letter of Intent.

8-1: All other sports (late) final signing date for National Letter of Intent

RECENT ADDITIONS TO CPOA Pennsylvania

Shaun Faulk – Football – Hempfield Area HS
Kristin Schmucker – Softball – Greater Latrobe HS

NCAA News

NEWS ON INDIVIDUAL COLLEGES

Indiana University has broken ground for several major athletic facilities, including the Memorial Stadium North Endzone Facility, a basketball development center and a baseball stadium.

UC Davis gained official D1 status and will compete in the Big West Conference and offer 26 varsity sports.

The **Oklahoma Sooners** must erase wins from their 2005 football season and forfeit 2 scholarships for the next two years

Bluefield College has decided to add another sport, but it is not the sport everyone keeps asking about.

The institution has decided to bring back men's and women's tennis after a long hiatus, hiring Matt Bohman as the new coach for both squads. Tennis will begin

as a club sport at Bluefield College for the 2007-2008 school year. But then they will look to compete intercollegiately in the Appalachian Athletic Conference.

Saint Peter's College (NJ) will no longer sponsor football as an intercollegiate [sport](#) as of July 1, 2007.

Seattle University will be moving from D2 to D1. Their final year as a D2 athletic program will be in 2007-08 then they will spend two years in a reclassification status as they move to D1.

Varsity baseball will be returning to the **University of Oregon** for the 2008-2009 season. Baseball is currently a club sport

Cal-State University Monterey Bay was granted Division 2 Status one year early by the NCAA

College Lending Controversies

The American media have reported unflatteringly over the past six months on problems in the college lending business. Two of the more disturbing items are the exchange of gifts from lenders to college financial aid advisers, which has cost a few aid administrators their job, and allegations involving improper lending practices to parents and students. This is a major news item since loans have now become the dominant form of aid in a typical student's financial aid package. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* quoted a Department of Education report in July that more than 900 colleges and universities conduct nearly all of their federally guaranteed student-loan business through a single lender, a sign that they may not be providing a legally required level playing field for their student borrowers.

A letter sent in June to 921 colleges nationwide does not directly accuse them of wrongdoing. But red flags have been raised by practices including certain college's financial-aid Web sites automatically directing students to a particular lender.

According to data collected by Student Marketmeasure Inc., a market-research firm in Bethesda, MD, a total of 1,412 colleges nationwide have 80 percent or more of their federally guaranteed student loans provided by a single lender. Of those, 531 institutions have 100 percent of the loans from a single lender.

The nation's largest student lender, Sallie Mae, is the dominant lender at 327 of the colleges, according to the Marketmeasure data.

The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) says their members are easy targets of public and Congressional ire as a result of the reports. A spokesman for NAFSAA called it "ridiculous" that his colleagues could be persuaded by gifts of sweatshirts and similar items. But NAFSAA has strengthened ethical policies that bar administrators from accepting more expensive gifts like iPods and DVD players, which reportedly was a common practice.

The U. S. Congress is attempting to reform the system in part by having the Department of Education take a more aggressive enforcement approach with schools that violate loan and work-study rules. Since the Education Department directs funds for grants and work-study through financial aid departments, schools will listen. But more than a small number of them say they are scapegoats for an entire system that needs fixed. What seems clear for now is that since the sometimes too cozy relationship between lenders and administrators have been exposed, the story isn't going away any time soon.

CPOA PA News

Local players have to hit the road to get a look

By Gavin Jenkins

TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Sunday, June 3, 2007

If you're a standout high school baseball player in Pennsylvania, you better like to travel.

Since the high school baseball season here is brief compared to other states, Pennsylvania's best spend most of their summers and weekends during the fall traveling throughout the country to showcases and tournaments.

Some of those standouts might see their hard work pay off Tuesday and Wednesday, when the 2007 Major League Baseball amateur draft is held.

Riverview coach Rich Griser, a part-time scout for the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, said it's a "no-brainer" that Punxsutawney catcher Devin Mesaraco will get drafted.

"He's all the rave right now," Griser said. "But there are a few other players that it wouldn't surprise me if they got drafted."

Mesaraco, who committed to the University of Virginia, said he had over 20 scouts attend one of his baseball games this spring. He attributed the exposure he has received to traveling out of the state.

"If you don't go do your showcases and play in the different tournaments, it's tougher to be seen as opposed to down south," Mesaraco said.

Alex Valadja , North Catholic's pitcher/first baseman who committed to James Madison this year, traveled to Arizona in January to play on Team Northeast in a Baseball Factory tournament.

Yough outfielder Tom Burkett, who signed a letter of intent to play at Charleston (S.C.) Southern University , attended five showcases last summer.

The name of the game is exposure. Burrell senior and Pitt recruit Cole Taylor may have put it best: "Teams don't come looking for you. That's why there are showcases. You got to go out and show them what you can do."

Still, even when the state's top tier players go the extra mile to display their talents to college and professional scouts, they don't always get recognized over standouts from other parts of the country.

That seems to be the case this year.

When Baseball America ranked its top 50 high school teams and top 30 high school players in the nation, Pennsylvania was not represented on either list.

Yough baseball coach Terry O'Delli said Baseball America's rankings are another example of Pennsylvania baseball players not getting enough exposure. Burkett thinks the state's players just get overlooked.

But, Alan Matthews, the associate editor in charge of high school baseball for Baseball America, stands by the rankings.

"Players who grow up in the south or the sunbelt are at an advantage over players in (the northern) part of the country," Matthews said. "Their swings are a little crisper, their bodies are a little more fine-tuned and their footwork is a little faster."

Matthews added that Baseball America has been scouting and ranking high school baseball players for 25 years.

"Our list is not just aggregated through days and months of scouting, but talking with the people who know players best, and that's the coaches and the scouts," he said.

Beating the odds

Josh Sharpless, a 1999 Freedom graduate who is a pitcher in the Pirates farm system, said the Baseball America rankings did not surprise him.

"It takes a little time for us to develop," he said of baseball players from the northeast. "Neil (Walker), he blossomed right away. But for me, it took me four years of college. I really took that time to grow up, gain some weight and gain some velocity."

Jon Mercurio, director of baseball operations for the Pirates, used to be a major league scout in the area and signed Sharpless to a pro contract in 2003. He said the state's talent levels rise and fall in cycles.

"There are years when there's lots of players in the area to see. In 1999, there were a number of players," Mercurio said. "You have good years and bad years. Since 2004, I'd say it's been down. This year seems to be OK. Next year, there seems to be a couple of good looking players."

Though Baseball America didn't have any Pennsylvania high school players in its top 30, it did rank Mesaraco as a third-team pre-season All-American.

Mesaraco said he's played in tournaments in North Carolina and Florida.

Baseball America's office is in Durham, N.C., and Matthews said he has seen players from Pennsylvania in tournaments in that area.

"It's not uncommon for teams with Pennsylvania players on it to come down and make a good impression," Matthews said.

Attending five showcases like Burkett did can be expensive. Griser said showcases can range from \$150 to \$500.

"You shouldn't go to every showcase that comes down the pipe," Griser said.

"You have to go to the premier showcases."

Griser said that the Allegheny Pirates, a fall traveling team, and the WPIAL showcase, are steps in the right direction for getting area players exposure.

Traveling far distances to showcases and tournaments might not be enough. Pennsylvania standouts also might want to consider going to camps in other states.

Matt Katich, a standout catcher from Mohawk, has committed to Notre Dame. He said the Irish didn't start recruiting him until he went to one of their camps.

Mike Martin, Florida State's baseball coach, said his recruiting budget does not allow his coaches to travel all over the country.

"We have very few guys from New Jersey," Martin said. "We have very few guys from out of state unless we have seen them in camp. That's where we have a chance to evaluate them."

Those long winter months

Taylor played football and basketball for Burrell this year. Of the six players interviewed for this story, he is the only standout who participated in a fall and winter sport.

There are some athletes in warm weather areas who play baseball -- and only baseball -- all year long. Once winter sets in, Pennsylvania standouts who choose not to wrestle or play basketball can lift and run to stay in shape, or take batting and fielding practice at indoor facilities.

Some say winter hurts baseball players from the north, while others say it's an advantage.

"There are two sides to this story," Valadja said. "A lot of kids from South Carolina -- I have a friend from Arizona who throws 91 miles per hour and he's 5-7, a freak of nature -- those players throw all year round and have an advantage to develop their arms at an early age. But, there's a spike, a current spike in players from the north being recruited because our arms aren't used up. We throw in the high 80s to low 90s. We have more off time and more potential. There's the theory that your arm only has so many throws in it."

Dave Kaye is a Riverview senior who is a Pitt recruit. He agreed with Valadja, saying, "It's nice to have those winters off to get your arm re-energized and get to full strength."

However, this may only work for pitchers. Valadja admitted that position players in the north seem to be at more of a disadvantage to southern players than pitchers.

Regardless, Duquesne baseball coach Mike Wilson said that high school athletes "should be well-rounded and play other sports." Wilson, who agreed with Valadja about the spike in northern recruitment, added, "A lot of southern kids burn out." Vee Hightower, a former Mt. Lebanon standout who was an All-American at Vanderbilt before playing Double-A ball for the Cubs, said he disagrees.

Hightower, who made the 40-man roster for the Cubs in the late 1990s, runs the Green Tree Sportsplex Baseball Academy.

"So many kids (in Pennsylvania) are only playing three months a year," Hightower said. "You can't substitute game-playing experience. You can only see so many balls on a tee or in a cage. You can't substitute seeing a pitcher who is trying to get you out in a game situation."

Weathering the storm

Geography works against Pennsylvania players. Meteorology, too, since the state's high school players often face unfavorable weather conditions during the first half of their season. Tim O'Malley, executive director of the WPIAL, said the high school baseball season can't be pushed back because of "proms, graduations and those types of things."

O'Malley also pointed out that many WPIAL players compete in summer leagues, which start around the time the high school season is ending.

Baseball teams in the WPIAL are not allowed to play more than 20 games in a season. After struggling to practice on a field -- simulating game situations inside a gymnasium seems to have become the norm -- during the first couple of weeks of the season, teams often are forced to post-poner a handful of games.

This does not give area players much time to prove themselves. And, the weather isn't always conducive to good baseball.

"That's why scouts don't want to come to Western Pa. to see guys play," said Neil Walker, a catcher in the Pirates organization who was a Pine Richland standout. "They would rather take their chances on some guys in Florida or Texas."

Walker said playing on teams that traveled to warm-weather areas to compete in tournaments helped him gain exposure.

"If I didn't have that, I can't imagine there would be too many people coming to games so early my senior year," Walker said.

Regardless of the lack of good weather for the state's high school players, Mercurio said one thing is certain.

"The good players are going to get noticed," he said.

CONTACT SHEETS

Remember to keep track of all questionnaires, calls, etc from college coaches with the contact sheets found in your STUDENT PACKET. Email me at martin.rock@cpoapa.com if you need additional copies!

NCAA ELIGIBILITY CLEARINGHOUSE

Every CPOA PA Student-Athlete has received a NCAA Guide for the College Bound Student Athlete as part of the STUDENT PACKET you received when you joined the program. In this guide, you find instructions on how to apply for your NCAA Eligibility Clearinghouse Number. Eligibility is based on what core courses have been completed, SAT scores and overall GPA in core courses. NCAA approved core courses, by high school, can be found at <http://actrs7.act.org/ahs>. STUDENTS APPLY FOR THEIR NCAA ECN AT THE END OF THEIR JUNIOR YEAR. HOWEVER, IT IS A GOOD IDEA TO REVIEW ELIGIBILITY AS EARLY AS THE SOPHOMORE YEAR TO ENSURE THE CORRECT COURSES HAVE BEEN COMPLETED! For more information about the process, email martin.rock@cpoapa.com for a NCAA Guide or call 888-ASK-CPOA (CPOA Program Members Only).

INTERNET UPDATES

If you have update information for your Internet profile, please forward to martin.rock@cpoapa.com. Remember that you automatically receive (2) two free updates per year. If you've upgraded your program to receive unlimited updates you can send updates every day/week if you'd like. Updates take approximately 72 hours to be made online.

REFERRAL PROGRAM

Do you know of a high school student athlete with the ability to perform at the collegiate level? A teammate from high school? Club team? From the newspaper? If so, contact your CPOA representative at martin.rock@cpoapa.com and if that athlete signs with CPOA PA, **you receive a \$50 referral fee!**

Season End Updates

Attention all sport athletes, your season end update forms which were mailed to you are **now overdue**. There are hundreds of coaches out there awaiting an update on your stats, awards and accomplishments from the past season. Please complete these and return to your CPOA representative immediately.

RECRUITING SEMINARS

CPOA Pennsylvania is planning to conduct several recruiting training sessions over the next few months. These sessions will include the basics of the recruiting process, how to choose the right college, review of NCAA rules and regulations, and how to best navigate this important process of college selection. Please let us know if you have interest in hosting one of these sessions for your teammates (students/parents) or teams/booster clubs (coaches).