

SPORTS

PSH baseball team opens season in Florida

*Mike Givler
Capital Times Sports*

With the coming of warm weather comes baseball season. The Penn State Harrisburg baseball team recently started their season with a schedule that included scrimmage games against nationally ranked Point Park and games versus other Penn State commonwealth campuses in Florida.

MARCH 1: POINT PARK 15, 7 (4 innings) PSH 2, 0

Point Park, ranked 5th in the NAIA baseball poll, took advantage of the Lions errors and inexperience by pounding out 17 hits in the games 11 innings. The Lions may have been a little intimidated by their national ranking at first, but calmed down as they got deeper into the games. Derek Slocum had a hit in his only at bat. Tim Gallagher and Mike Givler both hit doubles in the first game, but the Point Park pitchers shut down the Lions offense in the shortened second game by not allowing a hit.

MARCH 3: SHENANGO VALLEY 6 (2 1/2 innings) PSH 0

During a rain-shortened game in Florida, the Lions defense again proved unsuccessful with all of the runs being

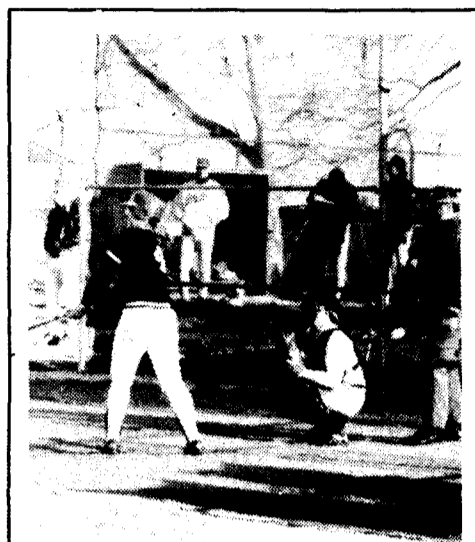


Photo by Karen Putt

Gerry DeBalko (4) takes his turn at bat against an Eastern College pitcher in Tuesday's doubleheader.

earned. The Lion bats had started to come to life when the rain began.

MARCH 4: PSH 4 (5 innings) BERKS 2

The Lions played their best game to date, starting with a three run first inning and collecting six hits total

including a double and an RBI by Slocum.

MARCH 4: MOUNT ALTO 7 (5 innings) PSH 1

The Diamond Lions must have left their bats and pitching on the field against Berks, as the make-shift Mont Alto team scored 7 runs in the first inning and the Lions were held to 2 hits throughout the game. Gallagher and John White each had a hit in two at-bats.

MARCH 5: PSH 2 (3 1/2 innings) SHENANGO VALLEY 0

The Lions took advantage of some Shenango wildness on the mound (5 walks and 2 hit batters) and combined it with good defense and the no-hit pitching of Slocum to play a solid game. Buddy Dodson (2 for 3) and Ron Morris (1 for 1) provided the offense the Lions needed.

MARCH 6: BEHREND 12 (6 innings) PSH 3

Again the Lion defense had its problems and committed costly errors that broke open a close game toward the end of the game. Morris again had a hot bat, going 3 for 3 with a double and 2 RBI's. Dodson also had a good night going 2 for 4.

MARCH 7: BEHREND 5 (5 innings) PSH 1

The Lion pitchers came together and pitched well, but a lead off homerun and a bunch of "bloop" base hits spelled doom for the Lions. Wayne (Tootie) Brizant had a hit in his only at bat.

MARCH 8: ST. JOSEPH'S 5 PSH 3

The Division II AA school from Indiana had its hands full with the Lions as PSH played a fundamentally sound game to end their Florida road trip. Brizant lead the offense with 2 hits in 3 at bats and Gallagher (1 for 2 with an RBI) and Gerry DeBalko (1 for 1 with a double) helped the Lion cause.

MARCH 12: EASTERN 14, 6 PSH 3,0

In the official season opener for the Lions, six costly errors broke open the first game early. Five Lions each had one hit and they were headed by Gallagher with a double and an RBI. In the second game, a scoreless tie was broke in the fourth inning on an error by Lion pitcher Givler, who otherwise pitched well, allowing only 2 earned runs in 5 innings. The Lion offense spread out 9 hits over the game but couldn't manage to score a run. Scott Werkheiser went 2 for 4 with a double, and White also had 2 hits in 4 at bats.

Ex-Lion pitcher realizes dream

Phillies sign Mitchell

*Mike Givler
Capital Times Sports*

Rob Mitchell is about to start living a dream every boy wishes for--to play baseball professionally.

Mitchell, who signed a contract to play baseball with the Phillies, left for Clearwater, Fl. on March 7 where he hopes to make a good impression and get on a pitching staff with one of the Phillies minor league clubs.

Mitchell, who became the first Penn State Harrisburg student to sign a professional contract, is scheduled to compete in Martinsville, Va. in the rookie-A Appalachian League after spring training in Florida.

"When I was young, all I wanted to do was play baseball," Mitchell said.

The 6'4", 160 pound Mitchell hasn't always had a great pitching career as most of the people who are signed to a professional contract. He graduated from Phoenixville High School where he was cut from the varsity baseball team as a junior, and didn't try out as a senior. He credits his misfortune to his wildness.

"I threw hard, but never knew where it was going," Mitchell said.

Mitchell said he was persuaded by his father to try out for the Penn State Berks baseball. Though Mitchell made the team he rarely pitched.

Mitchell said he received his biggest

break during Berks' trip to Florida in 1989 where Penn State coach Gary Pritchard saw him throw.

"He was having a very difficult time getting the ball over the plate," Pritchard said. "The kid was without any confidence or any idea where the ball was going."

Pritchard took him aside and worked with his mechanics. Pritchard said Mitchell immediately started throwing the ball over the plate and he saw a spark in Mitchell's eye that told Pritchard he had accomplished something.

"He gave me the chance to pitch and to improve myself mentally," Mitchell said of Pritchard. "He gave me the confidence I needed to throw strikes."

A Phillies' scout spotted Mitchell during tryout camp at Chestnut Hill Academy near Philadelphia. Mitchell said he threw five pitches and the scout hold him to stop throwing so no other teams would see him. Mitchell said his fastball was estimated at almost 90 mph, but it was his velocity that impressed the scout.

"They say I have a moving fastball," he said. "The Phillies want ball movement."

The public accounting major plans to finish his schooling at Penn State Harrisburg unless baseball options interfere.



Photo by Karen Putt

Marshall Walters (25) awaits a chance to steal 2nd base as the pitcher for Eastern College throws home.

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