

Juniata pipeline pumps steady supply of players to Susquehanna League

By ERIC DETWEILER *For The York Dispatch*



Darren Hake calls his decision to switch to Red Lion's Susquehanna League team for this season one of the toughest he's ever had to make.

After all, he'd spent six years at Windsor. It wasn't easy to leave.

But the motivation for moving was simple. The 2006 graduate of Juniata College wanted the chance to keep playing with some of his former teammates, especially Jason Enoch, who is entering his senior season at Juniata.

Hake said he and Enoch had spent the past few years trying to convince the other to switch teams so they could be teammates over the summer. Entering his first post-college Susquehanna League season, Hake knew it was time for a change.

"Finally, this year I buckled," Hake said. "It was the first year where I didn't get to play with Jason during the school year because I'd graduated. I just missed playing with some of these guys so much that I decided that I'd like to play with some of the guys I'd played with in college."

With Hake moving to Red Lion, eight of the nine current or former Juniata players in the league are now represented on two teams, according to league statistician Steve Kline. In addition to Hake and Enoch, Red Lion has three other players on its roster with Juniata ties - Jayme Fye, Ryan O'Donnell and Cory Poff.

East Prospect, meanwhile, boasts three 2003 Juniata graduates in Chad Moyer, Josh Finnafrack and Walt Goedkoop. The other Susquehanna League player with Juniata ties is Kyle Saxman of Jacobus, who will be a sophomore at Juniata.

Moyer, a Red Lion graduate, brought his friends to East Prospect. He said all the Juniata players in the league get along because of their shared experiences at the 1,460-student college in Huntingdon.

"Juniata's a small school, and I think we just bonded really well," Moyer said. "We saw each other in classes and all the time, and I think that's why we still wanted to stick around and play ball, whether it's together or against each other."

This adds an extra dimension to the games between the two clubs. Hake said there's a lot of pre-game talk about old times and joking during batting practice. Moyer agreed the games feel different.

"It's really a great time when we get together and play against Red Lion," Moyer said. "You don't want them to beat you and you try your hardest, but at the same time, win or lose, after the game we still get together and we talk about the game and hang out."

However, Enoch talked about wanting to gain bragging rights. So far this year, he's got them, with Red Lion taking the first three games, 5-3, 8-0 and 6-1. The fourth and final meeting is Saturday, July 28, at Red Lion.

Enoch, a Hempfield grad, said it's not surprising to see a lot of Juniata players in the league because of the coaching staff's commitment to recruiting in the York and Lancaster area. Hake said there's always talk during the college season about where people are playing over the summer, and he wouldn't be surprised if that leads to more Juniata players joining the Susquehanna League in the future.

It also wouldn't be surprising to see more of the new Juniata players welcomed by the alumni in the league. Every fall, graduated players go back for an alumni game against the current team. After playing in his first one, Hake said he liked getting to see his former teammates and meet the new team members.

"Juniata is such a tight knit community. Just because people graduate doesn't mean you're not going to see them," Hake said. "When we go up there, there's always gatherings at the baseball house, and you'll see people who have been out of school for two or three years. You get to know them just like you get to know anyone else."

Perhaps if the Juniata players are successful and the Susquehanna League's popularity continues to grow with current and former Eagles, East Prospect and Red Lion matchups in the future could be mistaken for the alumni game.

-- Reach Eric Detweiler at sports@yorkdispatch.com.