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Palmer standing out in debut pro season

Strong summer rolls on with no-hitter

By Patrick Slack
Staff Writer

Two innings in, he was walking off the mound ... passionately.

Midway through, no one in the dug-out would talk to him.

By night's end, he had delivered a gem for the record books.

A strong debut season of professional baseball hit a new level for Ramsey native, Anoka grad and Toronto Blue Jays pitching prospect Trent Palmer Aug. 19, firing the first seven-inning no-hitter for the Dunedin Blue Jays since 1979.

It's the next step in the pitching progression for Palmer, who excelled throughout high school as a four-year letterwinner and part of Northwest Suburban Conference championship and state qualifying teams for the Tornados.

He then went to Jacksonville University in Florida, flourishing on and off the field. Palmer developed into a top setup man his freshman season, then split time between the bullpen and rotation as a sophomore before eventually taking a spot at the top of the staff for the Dolphins as a junior in 2020.

"The big thing that led me there was being in a warmer state with warmer weather, having access to facilities outdoors at all times," Palmer said. "My time there on the baseball field, I loved every second of it, even with the ups and downs. Off the field, you talk about having a true brotherhood, that is what it's really like. It's 30 guys and you go hang out with all of them outside of the baseball field, it's not just two or three. All of us would go to the baseball house every night and just hang out."

Palmer got off to a dominant start as a junior in 2020, winning back-to-back Atlantic-Sun Pitcher of the Week awards at the beginning of March.

But the season came to an abrupt end due to COVID shutdowns, dealing a blow to what was shaping into a breakout year.

"I think the biggest thing that was kind of out of the norm was nobody really knew what was going on when COVID first began," Palmer said. "We kind of all just thought it would be, miss a week or two and then be back to playing. That obviously didn't happen."

Still, an impression had already been made. Palmer was slated to be an early Major League Baseball draft pick.

"Heading up to the draft, I had an idea of where I was going to go," Palmer said. "I was being told anywhere from mid-to-late two to the end of the third."

Palmer wound up being selected in the



Trent Palmer, a Ramsey native and Anoka High School graduate, has flourished in his first season of professional baseball, tossing a no-hitter in his most recent outing Aug. 19. Palmer was drafted in the third round of the 2020 Major League Baseball draft by the Toronto Blue Jays and has a 3.29 ERA in 12 starts in his first minor league season this year for Class A affiliate Dunedin.

Photo courtesy of Dunedin Blue Jays

third round of the 2020 MLB draft by the Toronto Blue Jays. With no minor league baseball in 2020, the start of his minor league career finally came this June with the Dunedin Blue Jays, a low-A affiliate in the Southeast League.

"Getting picked by Toronto was probably one of the best things that I've had happen in my entire life," Palmer said. "Being lucky enough to be supported by a whole country of fans. When I went to school there were quite a few guys that were drafted that I played with, so I kind of talked to them about it heading up to everything, to see what their experiences were like, so it was pretty easy making the transition. I kind of knew what was going on once I did get there."

Following the long layoff, there was an adjustment period for all players, but with an eagerness and excitement to be back on the field.

"I think at first it was kind of nice just to see games being played, even the ones you weren't playing in," Palmer said. "It was just nice to be able to sit and watch a bunch of your teammates go out and

play.

"It took a lot of people a little bit to get back into things was probably the biggest thing you saw, people kind of finding their groove. Then once they did, you could see some guys just start taking off."

Palmer among them.

He posted a 1.38 ERA in 13 innings pitched in July, and a 2.16 ERA in his first three starts of August. For the year, he has a 3.29 ERA in 12 starts, including 52 strikeouts to 32 walks in 41 innings of work through Aug. 24.

His three August starts have been his three longest, getting stretched out and more chances to showcase what he can do, against a new caliber of competition.

"The competition is so competitive from top to bottom," Palmer said. "You don't have holes in the lineup. You've got to work all the way through, one through nine. I think that's the biggest thing, the length of lineups and how good players really are in professional baseball."

"It's much nicer to be able to go a little

bit longer into outings. You kind of start to find your groove. You don't always have it the first, second or third inning. It sometimes takes a little bit to get the wheels rolling."

No outing has been better, or more indicative of his potential, than his most recent.

Going against Minnesota Twins' affiliate Fort Myers, the 12th start of Palmer's professional career did not appear to be anything out of the ordinary early on. In fact, six outs in, it was simply irritating.

"After the second inning I had one walk and no strikeouts," Palmer said. "And I came in and I was ... a little upset I should say," Palmer said. "We've been stressing the strikeout-to-walk ratio and I was kind of like, 'Wow, this is not going to work.' So I went out and started picking up more strikeouts."

In bunches.

Palmer struck out the side in order in the third. He fanned another two batters in the fourth and fifth as well.

"It probably wasn't until the middle of the fifth I kind of realized, 'Wow, there's really no hits on the board.' A lot of that was because in-between innings no one was coming up and talking. I usually try to stay loose, but no one was talking to me. I'd ask people questions and they'd give super short responses."

By night's end, Palmer had 10 strikeouts and three walks. No runs allowed, no hits on the board.

It was a night dreams are made of, where everything fell into place. Even dating back to youth ball, Palmer had never tossed a no-hitter.

"Little League I always hit my pitch count and in high school I could never really do it," Palmer said. "It was something you always dream of, but you never really get that many opportunities to do so. It was just kind of cool to set some history within the Blue Jays organization, just being lucky enough to get the opportunity from them to kind of put a footprint in."

The outing earned Palmer Southeast League Pitcher of the Week honors, with one month remaining in the 2021 season.

Looking ahead, the minor league road can be a long one, but Palmer isn't one to spend much time thinking about that. Every day, every at-bat offers another challenge, another chance to get better.

And occasionally make a little history.

"I think the biggest goal is continuing to cut down my walk rate, continue to pound the zone and force initiative rather than have it forced upon you," Palmer said. "I don't really look down the road, just because every day is an opportunity to get better and perfect the way you go about things. So I just kind of try to take it day by day and whenever opportunities arise, try to make the most out of it."

patrick.slack@apgecm.com

Melhus wins Northfork club title

The Links at Northfork Golf Course in Ramsey held its annual Club Championship on Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 21-22.

Mike Melhus, a Rogers resident, won the event for the second time. Melhus won the event against Blake Onkka in a four-hole aggregate score playoff by one stroke.

Melhus and Onkka both finished the two-day, 36-hole event, in 3-over par before the playoff.

At this time no date has been set for the 2022 club championship.



Mike Melhus emerged on top after a playoff to win the Links at Northfork Club Championship in Ramsey held Aug. 21-22.

Photo courtesy of Links at Northfork

Jordan Sauve nominated for NCAA Woman of Year honor

Blaine graduate Jordan Sauve is one of two Upper Midwest Athletic Conference nominees for the NCAA Woman of the Year honor.

Only 153 student-athletes across all three NCAA divisions still remain in consideration for the honor.

The NCAA Woman of the Year selection committee will announce the top 10 from each of the three NCAA divisions and then three finalists in September before the Committee on Women's Athletics will select the final winner, announced later this fall at the annual awards ceremony in Indianapolis.

Sauve was a four-year member of the Northwestern — St. Paul women's basketball team that reached the conference tournament in each of her four seasons. She majored in biology and earned a minor in chemistry and psychology. Additionally, as senior captain, she helped the Eagles earn their first share of the conference title since 2014-15. Sauve capped off her impressive career at Northwestern earning the UMAC Scholar-Athlete Leadership Award in April for her outstanding achievements in athletics, academics, leadership and service.

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