

Baseball: Workout Warriors

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Workout Warriors DeVito MVP, in Mid-Atlantic High School Baseball Classic All-Star contest

Archbishop Spalding's Paul DeVito signed up a little late for Old Mill graduate Lou Holcomb's Mid-Atlantic High School Baseball Classic combine on Aug. 5 at the University of Maryland College Park.

By the end of the weekend, however, every person at Shipley Field knew the rising sophomore's name.

"We had well over 200 kids at the combine and by the end of the game it was obvious that Paul DeVito was the number one player," Holcomb said. "He can run, hit, pitch. He can do everything. We had played all nine innings but the scouts and college coaches made us play one more so they could see him pitch."

DeVito, who was a key member of the Spalding varsity squad as a freshman this past spring, had two hits, made a catch against the wall in center field and pitched an inning on the mound.

"He made an acrobatic catch, had a couple hits, drove in a run and pitched an inning," Holcomb said. "He's just oozing with talent."

DeVito, a 6-2, 160-pounder, took it all in stride for his part.

"It was just a lot of fun," DeVito said. "I made a catch up against the wall that was really pretty lucky. It was just cool to play against that level of competition and play with a lot of guys that I play against all season."

None of the 40 college coaches in attendance nor any of the scouts actually talked to DeVito - his being a rising sophomore prevented that - but Holcomb's endorsement was pretty clear.

"If he keeps improving, he's the kind of kid that could write his own ticket," Holcomb said.

Two other county players took part in the all-star game on Sunday - a game the North won 8-6

with DeVito earning the Most Valuable Player award. Spalding's Dan Palumbo made the North squad and Jim Parreira of Broadneck impressed Holcomb as

well.

"He's a really a very good player," the Old Mill grad said.

Parreira, a left-hander, said the process was nerve-wracking, but productive in the end...particularly when he found out he made the team at 11:30 a.m. Saturday.

"With all those scouts there and there were like 100 or 150 kids in each of the tryouts, I really didn't think I would make the cut," Parreira said. "Lou Holcomb said we'd get a call Saturday morning if we made it, so when it got to be 11:30 I figured I was out. Then he called."

A transfer from Pensacola prior to his sophomore season, Parreira was under the radar to an extent for the 11-9 Bruins.

"People might not know as much about Jimmy but he hit in the four-hole for us and he's a big left-handed batter," Broadneck coach Gary Gubbings said. "He threw off the mound for them too. He's a good athlete with a lot of potential."

Spalding head coach Steve Miller was one of the coaches for the game and county resident Lee Schwarzberg was another for the event that included players from the entire mid-atlantic area reaching as far south as Norfolk, Va. and as far north as Massachusetts.

This year marked the third installment of the Mid-Atlantic Classic and it was the third time the combine nearly doubled in participants. The nearly 220 players was up from about 110 last year and around 65 in 2003.

The North squad was comprised largely of Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania while the South team had sections of Maryland, and all of Virginia and Washington, D.C.

"It's kind of unique in that there is the game element and not just the showcase (or combine)," Holcomb said. "I tell parents that there are certain things you can learn with a stop watch or a radar gun, but there are a lot of skills you need to see in a game setting to get a real feel for them. How is a player going to react in a game setting."

The setting for the game itself was enough to likely draw several of the players. The game, played at Shipley Field, gave the players an opportunity to play on a new turf infield with recently-renovated dugouts and batting cages.

"It was an awesome experience," Parreira said. "The facilities were amazing. It was just cool to play on that nice a field."

The county sent a slew of players to the event - there were 22 players listed on the combine's roster not including the three who made the team or others who were late sign-ups or walk-ups - but DeVito, Palumbo and Parreira were the only players among the 44 selected.

"There was a lot of competition," Holcomb said. "The collection of talent was impressive."

Not making the team did not mean all was lost either. In fact several of the scouts who attended Friday's combine did not attend the actual all-star game figuring they did not have much of a shot with the those players.

"I didn't get as many complaints about who got selected this year, but I try to tell people that even if you didn't make the team, there were still 25 scouts who saw you that didn't even come on Sunday (for the game)," Holcomb said.

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