



Monday, June 16, 2003

Anaheim Angels draft OU pitcher

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

Golden Grizzlies pitcher Brent Brown is one step closer to fulfilling his dream of playing in the big leagues.

Brown, a 6-foot-1, 190-pound left-handed pitcher, was selected by the **Anaheim Angels** in the 22nd round of the 2003 Major League Baseball draft on June 3. Brown is the 13th Oakland University baseball player to sign a professional contract and the 10th to sign in the last four years.

"It hasn't really sunk in for me yet," he said. "It's a great feeling and something I've been working for my whole life. I'm really excited that I get to keep playing baseball, and I'm looking forward to getting started with the Angels organization."

Brown finished his career at OU with a 7-13 record and 7.32 ERA. He had one of the highest strikeout ratios on the team with 164 strikeouts in 155 total innings pitched.

"Brent's a power pitcher who throws between 87 and 90 miles per hour," said OU baseball coach Mark Avery. "Batters don't react to his pitches well. He throws a fastball, hard breaking ball and a changeup. When Brent first came to us four years ago, he was a skinny, 150-pound kid. Since then, he's gained 40 pounds, most of it muscle. It's great to see his hard work pay off."

Brown currently is working out in Mesa, Ariz., with Anaheim's other 2003 draftees and will remain there to play for the Mesa Angels, a rookie league, short-season team that begins play June 22.

Poor spring weather inadvertently worked in Brown's favor when Oakland was forced to schedule some games this season in Jefferson City, Tenn. Brown benefited by the presence of a large contingent of major league scouts who gathered there to see pitcher Marc Cornell of Ohio University in a later game at the same site.

"Cornell was touted as a potential number one draft pick, so scouts from just about all the teams were there," Avery said. "The scouts got to see Brent start our game, and he pitched unbelievably well. He struck out nine batters in four innings and really opened up his opportunities that day."

Of Oakland's recent draftees, Avery said he believes **left-handed pitcher Jared Thomas** has the best chance at making the majors. The Seattle Mariners drafted Thomas in the 11th round during the 2002 draft. This season, he's starting and relieving for the Inland Empire 66ers, a Class A Seattle farm club based in San Bernardino, Calif.

"Jared's already in high A-ball in his second season, and if he throws strikes, he's going to pitch in the big leagues," Avery said. "He has lots of movement on his pitches, and he's averaging over one strikeout per inning this season."

"We've got six or seven kids who have a chance at being recruited in the next couple of years. I think our program has reached a point where we're recruiting kids that work really hard, and our coaching staff has a lot of experience to help them develop. The players that work hard are really flourishing."

Other Golden Grizzlies who signed professional contracts include:

Sean Boesch, right-handed pitcher

Boesch signed as a free agent in 2000 with the Chillicothe Paints of the independent Frontier League. He has since retired from the sport.

Rob Brockman, infielder

Brockman signed as a free agent in 2001 with the Kalamazoo Kings of the Frontier League. He has since retired from the sport.

Matt Byrd, right-handed pitcher

Byrd signed as a free agent with the Atlanta Braves in 1993. He spent five years in the Braves farm system and one year in the Colorado Rockies organization before retiring from the sport.

Nick DiPonio, outfielder

DiPonio signed as a free agent with San Marino, Italy, in 2002.

Don Kirkwood, right-handed pitcher

Kirkwood signed with the California Angels in 1972. In a five-year major-league career, Kirkwood pitched for the Angels, Chicago White Sox and Toronto Blue Jays. He retired in 1978 with an 18-23 record and 4.37 ERA.

Matt McLellan, right-handed pitcher

The Toronto Blue Jays drafted McLellan in the seventh round of the 1997 draft. He has since retired from the sport.

Justin Robertson, right-handed pitcher

Robertson signed as a free agent with the Chillicothe Paints in 2001. He has since retired from the sport.

Chuck Van Robays, catcher

Van Robays signed as a free agent with the Johnstown Jonnies of the Frontier League where he played in 2000 and 2001. He signed with the Baltimore Orioles in 2002 as a free agent and was assigned to the Bluefield Orioles, a Class A team in the Appalachian League. Van Robays currently plays with the Cook County Cheetahs in the Frontier League.

David Viane, right-handed pitcher

The Seattle Mariners drafted Viane in the 20th round of the 2002 draft. He's currently pitching in relief for the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers, a Class A Seattle farm club based in Appleton, Wis.

Adam Sokoll, right-handed pitcher

The Atlanta Braves drafted Sokoll in the 21st round of the 2001 draft. He played for the Danville Braves of the Appalachian League, the Lincoln Saltdogs of the independent Northern League and the River City Rascals of the Frontier League. Sokoll was traded last April to the Cook County Cheetahs of the Frontier League then subsequently was released.

Erik Swanson, left-handed pitcher

The Seattle Mariners drafted Swanson in the 12th round of the 2000 draft. He played for the Schaumburg Flyers, an independent team, and was traded to the Kalamazoo Kings last March. For a Golden Grizzlies baseball season recap, statistics, team roster and archived stories, visit the [OU Athletics](#) Web site.

SUMMARY

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Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Monday, June 16, 2003
Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Monday, June 16, 2003
Article Start Date: Monday, January 12, 2004