



Wednesday, July 11, 2001

Atlanta Braves draft OU pitcher

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

The **Atlanta Braves** selected Oakland University senior pitcher Adam Sokoll in the 21st round of the 2001 Major League Baseball draft. Sokoll is the second OU player in as many years to be selected in the draft.

Sokoll, a 6-foot-3, 195-pound right-hander from Clarkston, finished OU's 2001 season with a 2-8 record and 7.34 ERA. He also struck out 65 hitters in 68.2 innings.

"Basically, Adam was an unscouted kid out of high school who made himself into a bona-fide prospect," said OU baseball coach Mark Avery. "When he first joined the team three years ago, he was a skinny kid who weighed about 150. He worked religiously to gain strength and wound up adding about 10 miles per hour on his fastball. Plus, he's only 21 and still physically maturing. You've got to root for a kid with that kind of desire."

Atlanta Braves Scout Nick Hostetler, who signed Sokoll, said the first time he saw him pitch was by happenstance during the 2000 season.

"I was supposed to see a high school game in Battle Creek, but it got rained out," Hostetler said. "On my drive home I had to go through Detroit and I knew Oakland University had a baseball game scheduled, so I thought I'd stop and watch. Adam threw extremely well that day – he had real good stuff."

After seeing him pitch a total of three times, Hostetler advised the Braves to draft Sokoll based upon his build and repertoire of pitches.

"Adam's tall and lanky and has a good pitcher's body," Hostetler said. "He reminds you a lot of (right-handed pitcher) Jeff Weaver of the (Detroit) Tigers."

"Adam has all the tools – he's got an average to above average fastball, has a good feel for a curveball and has a good, hard slider. He's struggled with command of his pitches, but we think that will come along as he works with our pitching coaches."

Currently, Sokoll is pitching for the Danville Braves, a short-season, rookie-level farm club in the Appalachian League. Through July 5, he had no record and a 9.45 ERA in five relief appearances. He also has struck out four and walked six in 6.2 innings.

Hostetler said Sokoll's best chance to make it to the major leagues is as a relief pitcher.

"Adam's going to have to change speeds and mix it up and spot his pitches, because he doesn't have a fastball to blow away people," Hostetler said. "I think if we can get him to the point where he can come in for two innings and show his stuff, he'll make a good set-up reliever."

SUMMARY

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Created by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Wednesday, July 11, 2001

Modified by CareTech Administrator (webservices@caretechsolutions.com) on Wednesday, July 11, 2001

Article Start Date: Wednesday, December 3, 2003