

High schoolers continue with their preseason

January 22, 2008

By Dave Perkin

TUCSON—More than 250 high school players gathered at the Diamondbacks minor league complex last weekend for the second annual Under Armour Preseason All-America Tournament.

The event began in chilly weather on Saturday morning. Divided into 16 teams, the players started off with defensive drills, batting practice and 60-yard dashes.

All four diamonds at the complex were in constant use as games started Saturday afternoon and continued all day Sunday. Play was ragged and sloppy, and the young hitters showed significant difficulty hitting with wood bats. Despite that, a handful of position players excelled, including:

Matthew Ramsey, Sr., c, Farragut HS, Knoxville: Ramsey, No. 40 on Baseball America's 2008 Top 100 High School Prospects list, was light years ahead of all other players in this event. His strong muscular build appears to be carved out of granite, and his athletic ability is remarkable for a catcher. He ran a 6.73 60-yard dash, and peaked at 93 mph during a pitching stint on Sunday.

From behind the plate Ramsey's clothes-line throws to second consistently rank in the sub 2.00-second range. Ramsey's bat and projectability may not be on par with Kyle Skipworth, the top-rated catcher in the '08 class, but he is definitely a premium talent. He is committed to Tennessee.

Kris Bryant, Soph., 3b, Bonanza HS, Las Vegas: At 6-foot-4, 180 pounds, Bryant presents an ideal, projectable frame. A scout familiar with him insists that he sits in the mid to high 80s during pitching stints. His future, however, figures to be as a corner infielder.

Bryant's best tool is his bat. Unlike so many amateur hitters who are accustomed to metal bats, he understands the wood bat concept of snapping the wrists and firing the bat head. He figures to develop power as he fills out and matures physically.

Defensively, Bryant shows clean fielding actions, a strong and accurate arm, and soft hands. His only impediment is his speed as he ran a 7.42 in the 60-yard dash. However, Bryant has the frame, bat, arm and glove that scouts look for.

Tim Maitland, Sr., of, Heritage HS, Colleyville, Texas: Maitland's wiry frame contains less body fat than a steel fence post. Blazingly fast at 6.54, he is a high energy, maximum effort center fielder in the Lenny Dykstra mold. Maitland's breathtaking quickness enables him to get roadrunner like jumps, and he stole several bases without a throw.

His arm is acceptable for center, but Maitland will need to improve at the plate. He is patient (perhaps too patient), and when he does go after a pitch he jumps at the ball and flies open too soon, often pulling it hard and foul. Tim will need to let the ball get deeper and then look to slap line drives around the yard. Learning to drag bunt may help boost his batting average. He's not yet committed to a college.

Niko Vasquez, Sr., ss, Durango HS, Las Vegas: Vasquez was the hottest hitter in the latter portion of the Area Code Games in August. While his bat was not as productive in Tucson, he has improved considerably defensively. His fielding actions are significantly smoother and cleaner and his arm is strong and accurate. A Sunday pitching foray found his fastball sitting in the mid 80s. At No. 49, Vasquez is committed to play for the two-time defending champions at Oregon State.

Niko's 7.24 speed signals a future at either second or third, particularly if he continues to develop driving power. Vasquez projects to have the glove, arm and bat to hold down either spot at advanced levels.



Matt Ramsey
Top Senior Prospect at
Under Armour Pre-Season
All-America Tournament

Alex Ramon, Sr., of, Coral Gables HS, Miami: Ramon was the most impressive athlete in Tucson. His perfectly proportioned frame features broad shoulders, a narrow waist, long legs and arms, and large, strong hands. Hampered all weekend by a sore hamstring, he still ran a 6.66 60.

Ramon's leg problems hindered his hitting, causing him to wave at and stumble after pitches. Despite those restrictions, his swing is fluid and effortless. However, he will need to correct a habit of dropping his back shoulder when starting his cut. When healthy, Ramon has the frame and physical tools to merit close attention from scouts.

James McCann, Sr., c, Dos Pueblos HS, Santa Barbara, Calif.: McCann has a perfect solid catcher's build at 6-foot-2, 200 pounds. James shows pop in his lefthanded swing, despite a tendency to chase fastballs up and out of the zone. He exhibits advanced receiving skills and an arm consistently in the 2.00 range.

Hector Acosta, sr., of, Junction City HS, Ogden, Kan.: Scouts may be turned off by Acosta's less than chiseled frame, but he ran a 6.81 60 and was the only one to clear the fence in a game.

Ryan Curl, Sr., of, St. Francis Desales HS, Gahanna, Ohio: Curl is a terrific athlete with 6.69 speed and an ideal build. He has a decent arm, can touch the mid-80s on the bump with hard downward arm-side movement. Extremely unrefined as a hitter, and will need to greatly improve his mechanics and timing. He is committed to Miami (Ohio) and is worth following on raw tools alone.

Bobby Egeberg, Sr., of, Estrella Foothills HS, Goodyear, Ariz.: At 6.50, Egeberg was the fastest player in camp. A center fielder, Egeberg holds the bat beyond his back shoulder prior to swinging, adding unneeded length and distance to his backswing. He'll need to shorten his stroke and look to knock line drives and ground balls to all fields. Hitting obviously wasn't the only focal point and several pitchers opened eyes and lit up radar guns, including:

Austin Adams, Jr., rhp, Zephyrhills HS, Zephyrhills, Fla.: Austin's slender but broad shouldered 6-foot-2, 165-pound build is ideal for a young pitcher and indicates a maximum amount of projection. Adams shows a nice feel for a variety of pitches. His four-seam fastball sits in the 86 to 88 mph range. He also tosses a low-70s curve, a high-70s slider and a changeup around 76. The curve is his best pitch; it displays tilt, depth and a sharp two-plane break. Mechanically, the ball leaves Adams' hand easily but he will need to improve his finish, which is currently hurried and unbalanced.

Tony Calhoun, Jr., rhp, Temecula Valley HS, Temecula, Calif.: Calhoun's frame is more mature and less projectable than Adams', but his arm has slightly more zip at this stage. Calhoun fires a fastball that sits comfortably in the low 90s, peaking at 94. He'll need to sharpen his curve, which hits 66-70 on the gun and is flat and stays high in the strike zone.

Nicholas McBride, Jr., rhp, Ragsdale HS, Lewisville, N.C.: At 6-foot-4, 170 pounds, McBride is a two-way talent who doubles as an outfielder. A righthander with a highly projectable frame, he exhibits a fastball that registers between 87 and 89.

His arm slot is lower than is Adams', so the ball does not leave his hand quite as smoothly. McBride will need to sharpen his command and refine his secondary pitches, but his frame and live arm figure to attract Division I recruiters and pro scouts to his future starts.

Nathan Fawbush, Sr., rhp, Union Grove HS, Stockbridge, Ga.: Built like a foul pole at 6-foot-6, 180 pounds, Fawbush is another highly projectable righthander. He slings an 87 to 89 fastball but his control and command are poor, due to a low and inconsistent arm slot and hurried delivery. However, his projectable frame and live arm will no doubt draw interest, probably in the later rounds of the draft.

Tommy Collier, Sr., rhp, Cy-Fair HS, Cypress, Texas: Collier has a mature frame with moderate projection, but he does show a strong arm and a great deal of pitching smarts. He locates and spots his 87-91 mph fastball extremely well, working both sides of the plate. He mixes in a 70 mph curve and 77 mph change, doing a fine job of changing pitches, speeds and locations. Collier cleverly approaches lefthanders with an 83 to 85 fastball on the outside corner which has late downward movement and some tailing action.

Breck Ashdown, Jr., 3b/rhp, Catalina Foothills High, Tucson: An American League scout had positive things to say about this local player, who is tall and projectable at 6-foot-4, 210 pounds. Ashdown had a monster BP session, and also took a turn on the mound and sat in the high 80s with his fastball. "He has a nice arm, but has no idea where it is going" the scout said.

Justin Koehler, Sr., rhp, Buchach High, Atwater, Calif.: Finally, this 2008 Cal State Fullerton recruit blew away batters in his pitching stint. Koehler's build (listed at 6-foot, 170 pounds) and stuff probably indicate more of a college pitcher than a professional one at this stage. Nonetheless, he aggressively attacks hitters with a low 90s fastball and hard high-70s curve.