

Porter, Wolfe give EMU shot in arm

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

"Eastern Michigan is a rising power in college baseball, and the trim diamond and attractive little roofed grandstand that Roy Scarborough and I found in Ypsilanti that day were much more inviting than a lot of spring-training ball parks I could recall. We were there for a Mid-American Conference double-header between the Eastern Michigan Hurons and the Falcons, from Bowling Green State University in Ohio."

MUCH HAS changed with the Eastern Michigan University baseball program since celebrated author-baseball writer Roger Angell's visit back in July of 1976. Angell wrote about EMU in his 1978 book "Five Seasons: A Baseball Companion."

The trim diamond and attractive little roofed grandstand are still there. The stadium remains more inviting than many spring-training facilities.

But the program is no longer a rising power in college baseball.

On that Saturday in 1976, Angell and major league baseball scout Roy Scarborough (then with the California Angels) were in Ypsilanti to check out two highly regarded major league pitching prospects: Bob Owinch and Bob Welch — both went on to pitch in the majors (Owinch with San Diego, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Montreal; Welch with the White Sox, the No. 2 starter in the Los Angeles Dodgers' rotation). The EMU team placed second in the nation that year.

SATURDAY APRIL 19, 1986: Bowling Green brought its baseball team to Ypsilanti. There were few scouts and no prize-winning authors in attendance on this cold, rainy day.

college sports

The Hurons, after a fast start, are going nowhere this season. Saturday's double-header with BGUSU assured them of that. EMU lost both games, sinking its conference record to 4-10, its overall record to 16-16.

Indeed, much has changed in the 10 years since Angell last saw the Hurons play. But there is one element of Huron baseball that remains.

Head coach Ron Oestrike and pitching coach Roger Coryell, regardless of the win-loss percentages, still send a steady stream of players into professional baseball. At present, there are 15 ex-Hurons in professional baseball, including Welch and Wayne's Pat Sheridan, who helped Kansas City win the world championship last year and is now in the Tigers' organization.

The Hurons have had exceptional success in promoting pitchers into the big time. Welch, Owinch and John Martin (St. Louis-Detroit) came from the glory days. Bryan Clutterbuck (Milwaukee), Jay Davison (Philadelphia), Joe Slavik (Detroit), Ken Spratke (Seattle), Mickey Weston (New York Mets) and Mitch Zwolenky (Texas) are from more recent EMU teams.

The 1986 Huron team has a pair of right-handers that may keep EMU-pro baseball shuttling going.

NEITHER LIVONIA Stevenson product Brian Porter nor Westland John Glenn's Don Wolfe were red-hot candidates for major college baseball, let alone major league baseball, when they graduated high school in 1984.

"No, they were not highly recruited players out of high school," Coryell said. "But we liked their make-up."

They were competitors who wanted to improve and whose goal was to play pro ball. They were not afraid for us to push them to the limit. They were totally committed to improving."

It did not take long for Porter and Wolfe to make an impact on the EMU pitching rotation. As freshmen last season, Wolfe posted a 6-1 record and was named second-team all-MAC. Porter, after a slow start, was 3-1 with a team-best 3.19 ERA.

Thirty-two games into this season, Wolfe has emerged as the ace of the Huron staff. His 4-1 with an impressive 2.54 record. He has struck out 38 batters in 40 innings. Porter is 3-2 on the season with a 3.00 ERA.

"Porter can be a pro prospect if he continues to improve," said Coryell in a tone suggesting that he doesn't make such claims routinely. "Same with Wolfe."

From second-drawer recruits to pro prospects, a fairly impressive metamorphosis.

IHAVE been a .500 pitcher all my life and now this," Wolfe said. "I really don't know what has happened."

It's not all that mysterious, really. When Wolfe came to the Hurons, his fastball was clocked in the low 10 mph range. Same with Porter. Now, both throw in the high 60s.

"The mechanics they teach you up here are way different," said Porter, a 3.3 student. "Plus, we've been on a weight program. I'm stronger, and I've learned to spot my pitches better. You can't just throw it by these hitters like you could in high school."

Said Wolfe: "The biggest thing for me was getting command of my other pitches. They have taught me a change-up and the cut fastball really helped me last year. Lately, I've been using my curve more — you've got to have that up here. Plus, they really have me concentrating on spots."

Roger Coryell's teaching methods are unique. He puts a great deal of emphasis on distance throwing. When a Huron hurler begins his warm-up tosses, he'll take his first few pitches from beyond the mound. Coryell is also very demanding of his pitchers in practice.

"Pitchers have to extend themselves," he said. "It's like a sprinter. If he's going to run a 6.2 in the 60-yard dash, he's got to first be able to run a 6.2 in practice. You can't throw the ball easy in practice and expect to come out and throw hard in the game."

BOTH WOLFE and Porter have a long way to go before they're ready to take on pro ball.

Wolfe, for example, has had trouble maintaining concentration for seven full innings. He has let two leads slip away in the late innings.

"Basically, my head was just not in the games," Wolfe said. "All of a sudden, I just wasn't throwing hard."

Porter made a grave mistake Friday. It wasn't much that he was roughed up for four runs in 2 1/2 innings against Bowling Green.

It was my worst outing of the year, he said. "I was sick the night before, and I threw up a couple times before the game. But I didn't tell the coaches."

Bad move. Both Coryell and Oestrike were none too pleased with Porter's error of omission.

So, perhaps the two Observeland sophomores aren't the second coming of Welch and Owinch. But if Wolfe and Porter can continue their rapid rate of improvement, maybe we could convince Roger Angell and a few of his scouting pals to visit Ypsilanti next spring.

sports roundup

● **BASEBALL:** Trent Hiner led a 17-hit North Farmington attack Saturday as the Raiders outgunned Walled Lake Western 15-13 in a Western Lakes contest.

Hiner went 3-for-5 on the day with eight RBI. His dramatic seventh-inning grand slam home run off Western hurler Mike Gabriel proved to be the deciding blow.

Brian McDanel got the win for North (3-3 overall). Western jumped ahead of North 9-3 after one inning, but the Raiders scored three runs in both the third and fourth innings to pull even.

Todd Shepard went 4-for-5 and scored four runs. McDanel knocked in a pair of runs with two hits and Mike Rudin scored three times and knocked in two.

Western came back to win the second game 11-9. The 360-0. Roger Hancy anchored both the 890 and mile relay. Wise brought home the 440 relay and Chad Burgess the 2 mile relay.

ball and softball schedules were canceled Monday because of inclement weather.

● **BOYS TRACK:** Farmington Harrison made it three straight dual meet wins Tuesday, besting Walled Lake Western 84-53.

Leading the way was speedy sophomore Aaron Yaver. He won the 100-yard dash (10.7), the 220 (23.8) and the 440 (55.0). Yaver's has not lost a race yet this season.

Brian Soeder won the long jump for the Hawks (19-1). Eric Wise captured the pole vault (10-0).

In distance events, Pat Runk won the mile (4:55.0) and Chris Hart took the 2 mile (10:00.0).

The Hawks also captured all four relays: the 440 (48.6), the 880 (3:41.4), the mile (3:41.9) and the 2 mile (9:00.0). Roger Hancy anchored both the 890 and mile relay. Wise brought home the 440 relay and Chad Burgess the 2 mile relay.

Ex-Laker pacing Tartar attack

By C.J. Rieck
staff writer

Jana Baringer's reputation has made her a marked woman.

"I've been hit (by pitches) more this year than ever before," she said. She accepts it. She has little choice if she's going to continue doing what she does so well — hit a softball.

Besides, Baringer, a West Bloomfield graduate now in her senior year at Wayne State University, has worked hard at establishing her reputation. But she's learning recognition can be painful.

"After I got hit the last time against Akron, I went to first and our coach said to me, 'That's what a reputation will do for you.'"

WSU coach Gary Bryce calls Baringer's notoriety by another name — respect. "She's been walked intentionally a few times, which tells you

something," he said. "They don't want her to beat them."

SOUNDS LIKE good strategy, considering stats like this: a .313 batting average, 20 runs scored, a double, a triple and two homers and 11 runs batted in. Baringer also has six game-winning RBIs and leads the Tartars in walks (11) and times hit by the pitch (six).

Baringer is the only senior starter on a team ranked eighth in the NCAA Division II last week. The 25-12 Tartars are coming off three straight wins in the rain-shortened Riverboat Classic at Southeast Missouri State last weekend.

The victories came against some highly touted teams, including a 1-9 triumph against seventh-ranked Akron. Translated, that means WSU should climb in the next poll.

Baringer is a key to the Tartar at-

tack. How much so was evident last year, when WSU won the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) title but, with a 30-18 record, failed to qualify for the NCAA Division II tournament.

BARINGER SUFFERED through her poorest season as a Tartar. She batted .261, collecting a team-high seven doubles but drove in just nine runs. In addition, she was moved to third base after gaining All-American honors at shortstop as a sophomore. She committed 22 errors at third.

Bryce moved Baringer to third to make room for Gini Bruce, whom he felt was a better shortstop than Baringer. Bruce responded well, garnering All-American honors, but Baringer, who batted .320 and drove in 22 runs as a sophomore, slumped.

"She had a few problems (with the switch)," admitted Bryce. "I'm sure

it affected her year."

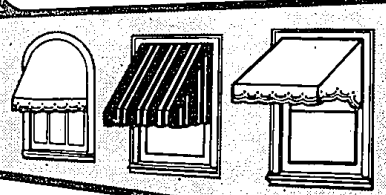
Baringer has made another change this year, but this one has been greeted more favorably. She's playing center field for WSU, and liking it. She's committed just two errors thus far.

"It hasn't been that big of an adjustment," she said. "I think I played every position my freshman year except pitcher and catcher."

Bryce isn't so sure Baringer couldn't handle those, too. "She's a good athlete; she can play a lot of places. If someone had taken the time to teach her how to pitch, I'm sure she could do that, too. She's got a real strong arm."

AFTER LAST year's slump, Baringer made other kinds of changes in her batting style. Bryce has noticed the difference.

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