

Kennedy changes minds on pro deal

BY DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

After first saying no to the Toronto Blue Jays, Scott Kennedy reversed his earlier decision and signed a professional contract when the baseball team made a better offer.

Kennedy, who was selected in the 11th round of the free-agent draft, had planned to return to West Palm Beach (Fla.) Community College in the fall, but the Blue Jays were persistent.

The two parties reached a compromise on the bonus amount, and Toronto agreed to include money to be used for Kennedy's education.

"We got a call Thursday from the Blue Jays' scouting director, and that's when I became aware of how important Scott was to them," Scott's father, Dennis Kennedy, said. "Obviously, he felt they were interested in him or they wouldn't have gone to the extent they did."

The hard-throwing Kennedy decided to accept the latest offer Sunday evening. Within two hours, the Blue Jays met Kennedy and his parents at Metro Airport and signed the promising young pitcher.

The 6-foot-4, 215-pound Kennedy

was assigned to the Dinedin (Fla.) Blue Jays in the Florida Coast League for rookies and was scheduled to report today. The first game is today, but Kennedy is not expected to pitch because of his late arrival.

Kennedy said the inclusion of educational dollars in the offer tipped the scale in favor of signing now.

"That pushed me over the edge, because I told them I did want some schooling in the package," he said. "The money is not away in the commissioner's office and when I'm done with baseball it will be there. That will make me use it, because it can't be exchanged for cash."

"It wasn't just a financial thing we were looking for," Dennis Kennedy said. "We were close when we first started talking. There was some give and take on both sides."

The Blue Jays also convinced Kennedy, who was drafted by the Detroit Tigers following his senior year at Plymouth Canton, it would be best for him to get an early start in their minor league system.

"I had a week to think about it, and I came up with more positive things in favor of signing and getting my career under way," Kenne-

dy said.

"They wanted to sign me right away because I'm only 19. They want to mold me themselves and correct some of my mechanical problems."

"I know it would help to get instruction from their coaches at the pro level. They spend a lot more time with you, and Toronto is known for excellent pitching coaches."

The rookie league season lasts until late August. Kennedy said he could be asked to participate in an instructional league after that. As with most young players, the Blue Jays hope to bring Kennedy along slowly with a program that will hopefully take him to the Major Leagues in about five years.

"I'm definitely excited but at the

same time I'm a little nervous," Kennedy said, adding his teammates and opponents will be mostly high school graduates and first-year college players like himself.

Kennedy has pitched for coach Fred Crissey at Canton High and coach Dave Carroll of Hines Park Lincoln-Mercury in the Livonia Collegiate Baseball League, and both know he has great potential.

The kid has a tremendous arm, and the one thing you can't teach is how hard someone throws the ball," Carroll said. "He just has a gift for that — and he's a ball of a kid."

In his senior year at Canton, Kennedy was 10-4 with five saves, 130 strikeouts and 47 walks in 84 innings. He pitched in three games for Hines Parks this year but had no decisions.

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