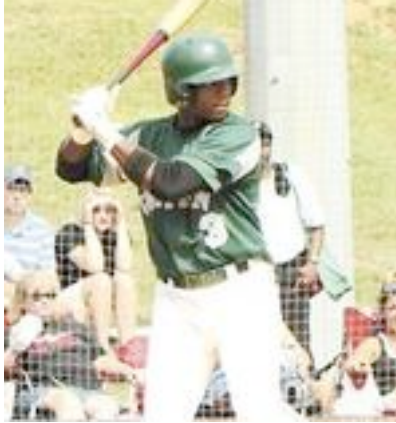


2008 BCA Player of the Year



Tim Beckham
Griffin High School, Griffin, GA

By David Himmelstein

In an era where a majority of black athletes are choosing other sports like football and basketball, baseball is lucky that Tim Beckham returned to his true love. The overall number one pick in Major League Baseball's First-Year Player draft is bound to inspire young black players.

At the age of eleven, Tim set aside his baseball glove and left the game for three years. He wanted to be a star in the NBA. Then his older brother, Jeremy, talked him into returning to the game, knowing that he was a special talent.

"I just didn't want him to get caught up in basketball and football because everyone around here plays basketball and football," said Jeremy Beckham. "His tools in baseball were much sharper than the kids his age. He excelled in basketball as well, but in baseball he was so much better and you could see that. It was obvious. It was apparent. We did have to kind of pry him away from basketball, but ultimately it was his choice. We just tried to influence that decision." (From griffin.ga.schoolwebpages.com *All eyes are on Beckham* Associated Press)

Tim made up for lost time quickly. Once he realized his true passion for baseball he dedicated himself to improving. Some kids with ability sit back and let things happen. Not Tim, he has a solid work ethic and is committed to getting better.

"With kids like that, you kind of see them and immediately you know," said Griffin coach Jamie Cassady. "As an eighth grader, he probably could've played varsity for us. The question with those kinds of kids, what is going to be their commitment to the game? A lot of kids come through with potential and talent, but they're not doing anything in off-season to better themselves. Tim worked at it." (From SI.com *The full package, top prospect Beckham ready to make leap* by Bill Trocchi)

"Once I started back playing, I realized my love for the game came back," he said. "I loved baseball again and I had an opportunity to be a good player."

Beckham is a five-tool shortstop. As a senior the right-handed hitter batted .482 (53-for-110) with 6 home runs, 13 doubles, 41 RBIs, 58 runs scored and 23 steals, leading Griffin to the Region 4-AAAA championship and to its first state championship series since 1981.

At 6-foot, 190 pounds, Beckham is physically mature, and most scouts feel he will be able remain a shortstop at the major-league level. It is apparent he would like to play shortstop in the Major Leagues. However, he would be okay wherever he got an opportunity to play.

"He's got soft hands at the plate and in the field," says Cassady, who has been at the school for 16 years. "Tim is the best player we've had and it is not even close. Tim is the whole package." (From SI.com *The full package, top prospect Beckham ready to make leap* by Bill Trocchi)

Beckham is the first No. 1 selection to be drafted out of a Georgia school since Mike Ivie (San Diego Padres) in 1970. Beckham has signed a scholarship to play at Southern California but wants to play professional baseball.

"I don't just want to be an average player," he says. "I want to be a Hall of Famer."

Well Tim it sounds like you are well on you're way to achieving your goals. We'll be watching for you. Good luck!