



BCA Player of the Year



Zack Wheeler
East Paulding High School
Dallas, Georgia

By David Himmelstein

In a year where good pitching dominated the draft, it should come as no surprise that a pitcher receives the BCA Player of the Year honors. Drafted at number six overall, Zack Wheeler, is ready to get his professional career started.

"Hopefully it'll be pretty short, like two years," Wheeler said of the time he'll need to steep in the Minors. "Maybe even a little bit quicker. Who knows?" (Chris Haft/mlb.com, Giants take focused pitcher in Draft, sanfrancisco.giants.mlb.com/news/article)

The 6-foot-4, 180-pound senior right-handed pitcher and designated hitter has a pro-pitcher's frame, that he has yet to fill in. This year he led the Raiders to a 25-12 record and a berth in the Class AAAAA state postseason tournament semifinals. Wheeler finished 9-0 with a 0.54 ERA in 77.2 innings, with 151 strikeouts, and only 20 walk. He also hit .350.

The Raiders made it all the way to the final four in the state tournament. Unfortunately, they lost a three game set to South Forsyth.

"This year as a team we accomplished more than expected. We moved up a classification, and did not think we would make it as far as we did," recalls Coach Boyd. "But we ended up getting hot at the right time, and it sure helped to have a guy like Zack."

Personality and consistency, along with a tremendous ability showed the other members of the East Paulding Raiders what they could accomplish. Things didn't always come easy for Wheeler. There was a time when he struggled with his command, but as he matured his control got better. By his senior year, he had no issues, and threw the ball where he wanted.

Wheeler was named 2009 Gatorade High School Player of the Year for Georgia, and he is a two-time First Team All-State selection as well as a 2008 Aflac All-American.

"Zack is a great kid. It has been a pleasure watching him develop as a player and a person," comments Coach Tony Boyd. "I have had 3 years with Zack, and I'll probably never get that experience again. He is just a special talent."

Wheeler tossed a complete-game, 13-strikeout no-hitter against Mill Creek in the second round of the Class AAAAA tournament. He compiled a 95-36 record in four varsity seasons, showing why the San Francisco Giants chose him 6th overall.

Wheeler is not only physically gifted and prepared to play major league baseball; he is mentally poised as well. As he demonstrated in a playoff battle against South Forsyth, Zack pitched a complete game, striking out 14. He also had 8 games during the regular season where he struck out 10 plus hitters, while the Giants' scouts watched eagerly.

"Zack can be described as a quiet leader. He is composed and focused. He does not get rattled, especially when he's on the mound. He is able to keep his cool, and doesn't show a lot of emotion," described Boyd.

Wheeler no doubt is prepared for the mental difficulties that may lie ahead. He listened closely to his brother Adam, who played four years in the New York Yankees organization. Conversations included exciting things, as well as the tough parts; but all came back to creating and sustaining a positive, solid mental approach to the game.

"The kid just gets it done!" exclaimed Coach Boyd. "He is a stabilizing force, consistent and in command. He pitches with a lot of confidence. When he is on the mound it is fun."

Congratulations on becoming the 2009 BCA Player of the Year. Good luck in the bigs!