

## Around The Nation: March 17

### Holmberg mows hitters down, Coppell prepares for district play

By **Nathan Rode**  
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While some prospects around the country are trying to regain their feel for pitching or simply waiting for the season to start, David Holmberg seems to be in midseason form already.

The lefthander from Port Charlotte (Fla.) High has made four starts this season and racked up the strikeouts. It started against Collier High of Naples in the season opener. Holmberg went six innings, allowed two hits, walked on and struck out 15. Then against Venice High he went six innings again, walked three and allowed just one hit while striking out 16. Against Manatee High of Bradenton in his third start, Holmberg again went six innings and struck out 12.

"The basics have been working, getting ahead," Holmberg said. "Ideally I like to try and bust hitters inside with the fastball, get their eyes going pretty fast. If they're behind a little with their swing I'll go with the same thing, fastball in. Then I'll change speeds with a changeup out or curveball down. That's ideal."

His fourth start came on Friday, March 14, against in-town rival Charlotte High. Though he only went 5 2/3 innings, he struck out 13 and allowed just three hits. So, in four starts, Holmberg has pitched 23 2/3 innings, walked 10, allowed eight hits and struck out 56—meaning just 15 of his outs have not been recorded by strikeouts. He's also allowed three runs, only one of them earned.

Holmberg is committed to Florida and is No. 52 on the Baseball America High School Top 100.

"Ever since I've been a little guy I've always been a Florida guy," Holmberg said. "I like what (Florida head coach Kevin) O'Sullivan has done."

Holmberg's fastball sits consistently at 87-88 mph, but can touch 91. He also has a very good curveball that has two-plane break and has shown feel for a changeup. At 6-foot-3, 220 pounds his body has some projection left that could lead to a little bit more velocity, though he'll rely on continuing to command his fastball and use it to set up his curve.

#### Cowboy Up And Down

Coppell (Texas) High's season hasn't exactly started as was expected. The Cowboys have six Division I signees (Arizona State, Dallas Baptist, Oklahoma, Princeton, Texas, Texas-Arlington) and three players in the Baseball America High School Top 100. A roster like that is reminiscent of last year's national champion American Heritage High of Plantation, Fla.

However, so far the talent just hasn't added up. The Cowboys are 7-6 to start the season, and the district portion of their schedule is right around the corner. Head coach Don English knows why the record is the way it is, but he's not making excuses and is confident in his team's potential.

"We've played a great schedule," English said. "No one's played better competition. We've thrown a lot of different people and looked at some reserves. Our main priority is to win that last game, the state championship. In 26 years I've never felt so prepared for district play because of our non-district schedule."

English and his staff have experimented with some different lineups, evaluating the team's strengths and weaknesses. Despite being loaded with so much talent, the Cowboys can't afford to wait around.

"We can't wait," English added. "It's not one guy's responsibility to get us going. It's about everybody. We need to learn how to celebrate the little successes like a good at-bat. We need to celebrate the process and not worry about or be locked in (on) the result. We need to do a better job of celebrating the little things that win ball games and championships."

English is most encouraged by his pitching staff, saying the team's pitchers have competed well. They're also getting comfortable using the inner half of the plate, keeping their curveballs down and missing off the plate when they miss.

Another positive in the slow start was an 11-2 victory against Carroll High of South Lake, which eliminated Coppell in the playoffs last season. "We've got them two more times," English said. "They're going to get better and we hope to get better, but that was a good start."

Two of the six losses came to Plano West High, last year's state champion. The Wolves finished No. 3 in the country with a record of 40-2 and are once again on the radar for this season's top 25.

The Cowboys have a tough task ahead with eight straight district games, but English thinks they're ready.

"Now's the time to put it all together, having the best 10-11 guys playing," he said.