

Rob Kaminsky Puts Team, Charity First

by Nathan Rode



Rob Kaminsky (Photo by Alyson Boyer Rode)

For the past several years, programs like Don Bosco Prep (Ramsey), Gloucester Catholic (Gloucester City) and Seton Hall Prep (West Orange) have stood in the baseball spotlight in New Jersey. Lefthander Rob Kaminsky is doing everything he can to push those powerhouses aside for a year and get St. Joseph Regional High (Montvale) some recognition.

On April 26, Kaminsky took the mound for his fifth start of the season against Don Bosco on one of the first warm afternoons the Northeast has experienced this spring. The Ironmen lost 13 contributing players from the 2012 season so they were no match for Kaminsky's arsenal. He pitched six innings, allowing three hits, three walks and a hit batter while striking out 10 in a 6-0 win for the Golden Knights. But it didn't come without a little adversity.

Before the game, Kaminsky cut his finger during his pregame routine in the bullpen. Part of his fingernail fell off when he caught it on the seams throwing a curveball. It made it challenging to get the proper grip and pressure on his fastball so his command wavered.

"I couldn't really get pressure on my fastball to be honest," Kaminsky said. "Just a little bit, I'm not going to whine about it. We got the win and that's that matters."

Kaminsky's fastball ranged from 88-94 mph, but sat mostly in the 89-92 range and he threw it a little more than 60 percent of the time, relying a lot on his curveball to get outs. Of his 10 strikeouts, nine came on his curveball, which ranged anywhere from 77-85 mph. At its best, it was 80-82 mph with sharp, downward bite that simply overmatched Don Bosco hitters.

Kaminsky's best inning came in the second when he surrendered a leadoff triple. The Golden Knights drew the infield in and got one out on a hard groundball to the shortstop that forced the runner to hold his ground at third. Kaminsky then got out of the inning with back-to-back strikeouts.

The draft is less than two months away and scouts will quibble over Kaminsky's size right up until someone calls his name. He is listed at 6 feet, 190 pounds, but he is physical with broad shoulders, big hands and lean limbs. He certainly has limited projection, but he has advanced feel for a high school arm to go with an average to plus fastball and plus curveball—which ranks as one of the best secondary pitches in the prep class. His size does hinder his ability to pitch downhill, which causes him to leave pitches up in the zone, but he is aware of that and is working to fix it.

"That's what I'm working on is my backside and my finish, getting my frontside out more and getting downhill," he said.

St. Joseph improved to 12-0 with the win over Don Bosco as Kaminsky earned his fifth win. He has yet to give up an earned run, has pitched four shutouts—including a no-hitter—and has 65 strikeouts and just seven walks in 27 innings. He now has 312 strikeouts over his high school career, leaving him eight whiffs—or probably one start—from the school record. He is also hitting over .500 this season with three home runs and 20 RBIs, but all of his postgame responses end with him lauding his teammates and saying how unimportant his accomplishments are.

"He's mature beyond his years," head coach Frank Salvano said. "The thing about him, as great as he is and the

things he has going in the future, he's a team-first guy. His goal is to win to a championship. You walk around the locker room, you wouldn't know who Rob Kaminsky is. He doesn't talk about himself. He's very humble."

There's only one point in which Kaminsky admits that stats matter. At the Perfect Game All-America Game last August, the participating players visited Rady Children's Hospital in San Diego. Kaminsky was inspired to try his own hand at making a difference. He is collecting pledges for every strikeout he records this season and the proceeds will go to the Englewood Hospital and Medical Center in Kaminsky's hometown of Englewood Cliffs, N.J. He says the campaign has raised more than \$15,000.

"That's when stats matter," Kaminsky said. "I thought if I'm going to be striking people out, why not raise money?"