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CHANGE-UP

MAY 30, 2007

2007 Draft Spotlight: Jack McGeary

By Patrick Sullivan

Founded in 1645, [The Roxbury Latin School](#) is the oldest school in continuous existence in North America. For more background, I will let [wikipedia](#) take it away.

...the school serves close to 300 boys in grades seven through twelve. John Eliot founded the school "to fit [students] for public service both in church and in commonwealth in succeeding ages."...The school maintains a need-blind admissions policy, admitting boys without consideration of the ability of their families to pay the full tuition...Other significant claims to fame are its students' high SAT score average – the highest of any New England independent school, according to Boston magazine – and its acceptance rates at the most competitive universities, despite maintaining a low tuition relative to its peers..."

Roxbury Latin is also my alma mater, something I say with pride but not immodesty given that I am pretty sure I could not gain admission these days with a machine gun. The school has a proud athletic tradition, consistently fielding teams ranging from competitive to championship caliber in the [Independent School League](#). The ISL is a 16-team league consisting of some of the most prestigious secondary academic institutions in the nation. Its hockey, lacrosse and soccer are all top notch, while when it comes to sports like football, basketball and baseball – my three sports incidentally – the league is considerably weaker.

ISL baseball is not without some tradition and occasional elite play. **Mike Smith**, who had a cup of coffee with the Blue Jays, and **Jonah Bayliss**, currently of the Pittsburgh Pirates, graduated from St. Sebastian's and Lawrence Academy respectively. But one through sixteen, particularly when you compare the league on a national level, it just does not stack up.

I should also note that the Boston area is not exactly fertile terrain for MLB pitching standouts. Since 1987, only 38 pitchers born in Massachusetts have even appeared in the Bigs (thanks again, [B-Ref](#)). And of those 38, only **Tom Glavine**, **Pete Smith**, **Ken Hill** and **Jason Bere** have tossed more than 1,000 innings. **Rich Hill**, **Chris Capuano** and Glavine are the best active Massachusetts natives.

This is what makes **Jack McGeary's** story so fascinating. It would be hard to overstate just how much more highly regarded of a prospect McGeary is than just about any other player in the ISL's history. Further, he is one of the very best high school pitching prospects to hail from the Bay State in recent memory. In their latest [Draft Tracker](#) (dated May 9), Baseball America ranks McGeary the 24th best prospect available, saying:

McGeary's stuff has been steady this spring. While his velocity isn't wowing scouts, he's sat at 87-91 mph with above-average command of three offerings. His curveball (76-78 mph) and changeup were both effective offerings in his last outing.

Here are Jack's numbers from this high school season:

G IP R ER H BB K ERA

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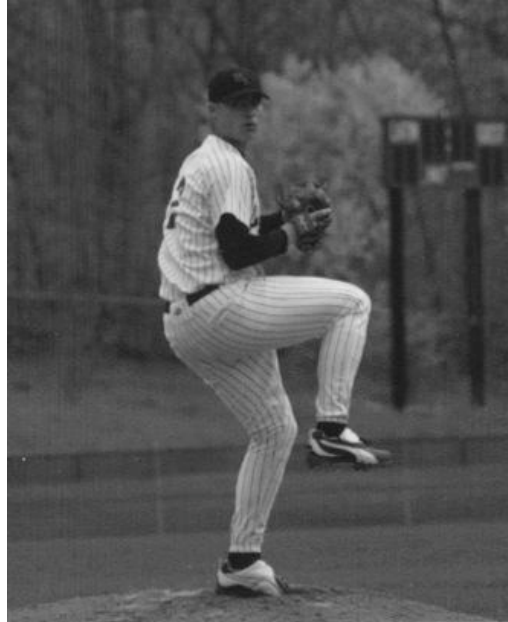
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McGeary 7 40 9 5 11 21 80 0.88

Jack throws a fastball, curveball and change-up, and garnered national attention last summer in a number of elite combines and exhibitions. He has committed to Stanford, a decision that has drawn some criticism in baseball circles given the dearth of quality MLB players produced by the program over the years. Still, if he is selected by a team that offers the right situation for him, he may not go to Stanford at all.

=====

I had an opportunity to talk to Jack, and follow up with a round of questions that he was kind enough to answer over email.



Patrick Sullivan: How has your time at Roxbury Latin prepared you for what now lies ahead? Has it in any way stunted your development as a professional baseball prospect?

Jack McGeary: In a baseball sense, I'd say RL hasn't necessarily helped, but it hasn't hurt, either. Obviously playing a 15 game schedule can never be beneficial to a player. With that said, no matter how many games we play a week, I would only pitch once, so I guess

in some ways the small schedule doesn't matter too much.

Like most other high schoolers, though, my development and maturity as a player come in the off-season and all the summer events. The summer circuit was huge for my development as a player.

Patrick: There are reports out there that you will not sign for anything less than \$2 million, and certainly not slot money for where you are projected to go. Is this true? If so, please comment on your rationale.

Jack: This is completely made up. We have not discussed any number with anyone, and I'm not sure how this would even happen.

Patrick: Despite its prestige as a baseball program, Stanford has not produced many quality Major League pitchers during **Coach Marquess's** tenure. **Mike Mussina** and **Jack McDowell** aside, there really is no other quality Big League pitcher to speak of in the last 30 years (Marquess's time as coach). If you aspire to make your living as a Major League Baseball player, why not commit to another school of academic repute with a better track record of developing MLB talent?

Jack: I have a few answers to this question. First, no "baseball" school boasts Stanford's academic reputation. Secondly, I think that development is more a result of individual work than from a program. I'd say the best pitchers in the Major League rely and have relied more on their OWN analysis of themselves than anyone else's. Therefore, I don't think you can look at a school and say they're bad at developing pitchers. Thirdly, the current pitching coach at Stanford, who has not been there too long, has a solid record with pitchers in the past couple years (see **Greg Reynolds**).

Patrick: All fair points. In his [ESPN blog](#), Keith Law said the following of you:

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[Mark Armour \(Rise/Fall of Artificial Turf\)](#)

"He's not as polished as a command pitcher who's considered a first-round talent should be..."

A few questions here. First, are critics making the mistake of placing too much emphasis on the short ISL season? Second, how would you describe yourself as a pitcher - command, power, or perhaps a hybrid?

Jack: Anytime there's a short sample of evidence (only 7 starts) results can be a bit skewed. For example, if you can't quite find a rhythm for a couple games, all of a sudden you don't have command. I'm sure **Greg Maddux** has had stretches in his career where he couldn't quite find his command.

I think I possess some elements of a power pitcher and some of a command pitcher. I feel like I can work off my fastball and am confident to use it whenever. Also, I think I have a power pitcher's curveball--one that's pretty hard with a sharp bite. However, I also feel like I can beat teams even when I don't have a great fastball. I'm able to locate well enough to set up hitters and beat them in other ways than just the fastball.

Patrick: How many pitches do you command at an elite level?

Jack: I feel like I can command all three pitches (fastball, curveball, change-up) at an elite level. I always have confidence in my fast and curve and will throw either in any count. I didn't have the most consistent command with my change-up this spring, but I think that's partly because I didn't throw it a lot. I think the more you throw a pitch, the more comfortable you get with it.

Patrick: Does the prospect of being selected by the Boston Red Sox excite you?

Jack: Absolutely. Growing up in Boston, I'm obviously a big Sox fan, and I think every local kid wants to play for them. So to have this possibility is definitely exciting. Just being part of this whole draft process is exciting.

Patrick: It sure is, Jack. It's exciting for all of us in the Roxbury Latin community as well. Best of luck and thanks for taking some time.

=====

McGeary has his detractors. Since he caught many by surprise last summer with a number of standout performances against elite competition, scouts were paying close attention to this high school baseball season to affirm what they had seen last year. Though his stats will not show it, there have been whispers questioning his command, and whether or not he, as Law wrote, possesses the "polish" of a 1st rounder.

Still, the kid is 6'3" tall, is lefthanded, throws 87-89 and touches 91 with regularity. His curveball is devastating, and when he commands his change up, he has proven unhittable at his current level of play. With coaching, hard work and natural development, that repertoire can take a pitcher far. And then there is the item of make-up, something front office personnel try desperately to get a read on before making a selection. Here is what one National League scout told me regarding McGeary:

...this kid is very poised, polished and advanced for his age. Many young prospects have good arms but are still just young kids. Jack McGeary is a young man who shows command of not only pitches but of himself. He is an excellent representation of his family, his school, his team and his community. He will be a success in more than just baseball. He is a true leader. It will be fun to follow his progress in either college or pro ball.

Splitting hairs over the command of an 18 year-old pitching early season ball in dreary weather against schools where baseball is an afterthought is all part of the job for the Major League scout. I understand that. But for those inclined to dismiss McGeary as a legitimate 1st round talent, remember to keep in mind the words above. He is a tremendous kid, is about to graduate from one of the

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most rigorous academic schools in the country and will be much more grounded than many of his peers in this draft class. I am not sure exactly what that counts for, but if I were getting ready to allocate the kind of money teams pay out to these draft picks, I would have to think long and hard about just how much McGeary's make-up should elevate his stock.

=====

For additional footage/coverage on McGeary, be sure to check out the following:

- His [MiLB.com Draft Report page](#), with a link to scouting video footage.
- A [television spot](#) on him from the local Boston ABC affiliate.
- [Another spotlight on him from NESN](#), the local Red Sox cable carrier.

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Comments

Great interview, Sully. Jack McGeary is more articulate than most adults.

Posted by: Al Doyle at May 30, 2007 7:39 AM

Thanks Al. It was a lot of fun.

Posted by: Sully at May 30, 2007 9:23 AM

How was the interview conducted? Hard to believe an 18 year old speaks that way.

Posted by: Adam at May 30, 2007 9:24 AM

"I had an opportunity to talk to Jack, and follow up with a round of questions that he was kind enough to answer over email."

Posted by: Sully at May 30, 2007 9:27 AM

Terrific interview Sully. Having worked with Jack in the classroom and on the field I can tell you he is the real deal. You captured that well.

Posted by: steve ward at May 30, 2007 11:11 AM

Great interview (and article), Sully.

I'm an RL alum too, and I have to say, I never dreamed that an RL student would be a potential first-round pick, and certainly not straight out of high school.

It's wonderful to hear that Jack's doing so well.

Posted by: Arjun Jaikumar at May 30, 2007 1:25 PM

is the cardinal program really that bad?? you are not mentioning carlos quentin who looks to have a pretty decent mlb career...

Posted by: fan at May 30, 2007 5:37 PM

I didn't mention Ryan Garko or Jeffrey Hammonds either. There are outliers for sure. But given the program's prestige and reputation, the number of impact MLB'ers does not seem commensurate.

Further, outside of my own opinions/assertions, there is a widespread perception in baseball circles that Stanford does a sub-par job of preparing young players for professional baseball success.

Posted by: Sully at May 30, 2007 7:48 PM

Great interview of an outstanding and interesting player at a great school

Posted by: Gordon Martin at May 30, 2007 9:14 PM

i played little league with jack and he was absolutly amazing hopefully more of us can show that we got what it takes like jack

Posted by: sam at June 1, 2007 7:05 PM

Thanks for keeping us posted on what is going on on the Upper Fields. Great interview!

Posted by: Darcy & Rob at June 7, 2007 4:30 PM

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Sully,

Nice to read an article written by my RL "little brother." Nice job. RL baseball getting national storylines . . . what a concept!

Bax

Posted by: Bax at June 7, 2007 9:35 PM

I should point out that our last commenter's older brother, another Roxbury Latin grad, was drafted by the Montreal Expos in the 12th round of the 1990 amateur draft out of Harvard University.

Thanks for stopping by, Chris.

Posted by: Sully at June 8, 2007 6:41 AM

Nice article, but this kid doesn't have near the talent of the previous pitching phenom out of Massachusetts, a man by the name of Jeff Allison. Although Allison's career may have turned for the worse because of a drug problem, his "stuff" was much better at the same age. Mcgeary makes mistakes, which Allison never really did, as evidence by I believe a 0.00 era his senior year. A quick note, I played for Belmont Hill and was a member of the 06' team. We beat Mcgeary that game because of his mistakes and great pitching on our side. Although our lineup looked clearly overwhelmed, and was out on strikes 12 of the 21 outs, he would bail us out with his change up, one which wound up over the left field fence. I am not saying he is not good, because he is very good, but first round material he is and was not.

Posted by: BH at June 11, 2007 4:02 PM

[USA Today Baseball](#)

REFERENCE AND ANALYSIS

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First-Round Picks:

1. Tampa Bay Devil Rays (66-96)
2. Pittsburgh Pirates (68-94)
3. Kansas City Royals (69-93)
4. Baltimore Orioles (69-93)
5. San Francisco Giants (71-91)
6. Florida Marlins (71-91)
7. Cincinnati Reds (72-90)
8. Chicago White Sox (72-90)
9. Washington Nationals (73-89)
10. Houston Astros (73-89)
11. Texas Rangers (75-87)
12. Oakland Athletics (76-86)
13. St. Louis Cardinals (78-84)
14. Minnesota Twins (79-83)
15. Los Angeles Dodgers (82-80)
16. Milwaukee Brewers (83-79)
17. Toronto Blue Jays (83-79)
18. New York Mets (Glavine, ATL)

19. Chicago Cubs (85-77)
20. Seattle Mariners (88-74)
21. Detroit Tigers (88-74)
22. New York Mets (88-74)
23. San Diego Padres (89-74)
24. Philadelphia Phillies (89-73)
25. Colorado Rockies (90-73)
26. Arizona Diamondbacks (90-72)
27. Minnesota Twins (Hunter, LAA)
28. New York Yankees (94-68)
29. Cleveland Indians (96-66)
30. Boston Red Sox (96-66)
31. Minnesota Twins (Hunter)
32. Milwaukee Brewers (Cordero)
33. New York Mets (Glavine)
34. Philadelphia Phillies (Rowand)
35. Milwaukee Brewers (Linebrink)
36. Kansas City Royals (Riske)
37. San Francisco Giants (Feliz)
38. Houston Astros (Miller)
39. St. Louis Cardinals (Percival)
40. Atlanta Braves (Mahay)
41. Chicago Cubs (Kendall)
42. San Diego Padres (Brocail)
43. Arizona Diamondbacks (Hernandez)
44. New York Yankees (Vizcaino)
45. Boston Red Sox (Gagne)
46. San Diego Padres (Cameron)