



TOP

Smith Competes In Summer League

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By Andrew Cato, ShowMe Times Sports Editor

Sawyer Smith didn't have the best spring.

An elbow injury sidelined him for several months during his freshman baseball season at Palm Beach Atlantic University (West Palm Beach, FL). Then he found out his coach, MLB Hall-of-Famer Gary Carter, had aggressive, inoperable brain cancer.

"I've come back 100 percent from my injury," Smith said. "I had a partial tear in my right posterior UCL (ulnar collateral ligament - the one typically associated with pitchers and "Tommy John" surgery). I had to set out for five months. I've been throwing since the beginning of May, and it feels great now. No affect on my game at all."

"The Kid's (Carter's nickname since his rookie year with the Montreal Expos) doing alright," Smith added. "He's been going through treatments and stuff right now, but he's supposed to be back coaching us next season."

Despite the adversity, the Sailfish, an NCAA Division-II team, were able to have a successful season, finishing 27-22.

"We played in the NCCAA (National Christian College Athletic Association) Regional at

Roger Dean Stadium in Jupiter, Fl.,” Smith said, “where the Cardinals do spring training. We were ranked nationally in the top 30 throughout the year in the NCAA.”

Things are looking up for the DHS alum this summer. He is currently participating in an invitation-only, wooden bat collegiate league.

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“My life’s been baseball all summer. Weather permitting, we’re at the field every day at 2 or 3 o’clock for practice and then we play every night at 7. We play almost every day - 50 games in two months - and we usually only have one day off on the weekends,” Smith said. “It’s a really competitive league - there’s only four teams because they’ve changed it from the Kit League to the Ohio Valley League. I play for the Tradewater Pirates in Dawson Springs, Ky., and we’re battling for the league lead right now.”

“Playoffs are the last week of July - if we win we’ll keep playing through early August,” Smith added. “They contacted my assistant coach back in the fall and I signed to play with [the Pirates] in the fall for this year, along with three of my other teammates from PBAU.”

Smith noted his team’s great success in the league since it’s inception.

“The team started in 1999 and they’ve won the league almost every year since it started, and we’re fighting for it again this year,” Smith said. “They’ve had a few kids get drafted. Our coaches are Dan Novak and JT Thomas and our general manager is Dwight Seymour. All former collegiate players.”

Smith also noted another unique opportunity afforded to him by this league - he gets to play on a field that was played on by one of the all-time greats of baseball: The Great Bambino.

“The Pirates play in Riverside Stadium, where the Pittsburgh Pirates used to play spring training games in the early 1900’s,” Smith said. “Babe Ruth, Honus Waggoner, Casey Stengel, and Ty Cobb all played here. It’s funny - there’s a picture of Ruth fishing in the river outside the stadium hanging up in the locker room.”

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