

The BEST Scholarship Group Partners with The Pocono Dome

AROUND THE VALLEY

Nikorak coming home for clinic at Pocono Dome

October 24, 2015

Mike Nikorak is coming home this weekend.

The former Stroudsburg High star who was drafted in the first round by the Colorado Rockies last June is coming back to Monroe County, more specifically the Pocono Dome in Sciota, where he will be one of four marquee names headlining a baseball clinic on Saturday to benefit the BEST Scholarship program co-founded by Billy Staples.

The 19-year-old Nikorak will be joined by former major leaguers Ray Burris, Billy Sample and Derek May at the clinic for kids, age 7-18. Burris had most recently served as the IronPigs pitching coach.

"The biggest thing about the day is that local kids will be instructed on hitting, pitching, fielding and throwing by major leaguers," said Staples, a teacher who through BEST has been able to send dozens of area kids to college who otherwise wouldn't be able to go.

"For \$40, a kid gets great baseball instruction, autographs, pizza, something to drink. I think it's a great opportunity. We're thrilled to have Mike Nikorak who wants to give back to his home area. He trains at the Pocono Dome, so he's thrilled to be coming back to give back."

Staples has authored several books on baseball and has brought dozens of former major leaguers into the area each summer to participate in a celebrity golf tournament and banquet to benefit BEST. Last year's celebs included Hall of Famer Ferguson Jenkins and three-time world champion



Keith Groller

hurler Vida Blue.

This is the first time Staples has run a baseball clinic and he may have hit the jackpot with Nikorak, who had a stellar high school pitching career at Stroudsburg and was taken No. 27 in last year's draft by the Rockies.

In addition to the clinic, there will be a Hot Stove baseball discussion at 6:30 p.m. for adults.

For more information about the event, contact the Pocono Dome at 570-992-DOME.

Billheimer earns top billing: Juniata field hockey standout Sarah Billheimer (Freedom) reached a significant plateau in her career on Tuesday by notching her 100th point against visiting Moravian. Billheimer is one of only four players to reach the 100-point plateau in the history of the Juniata program and ranks third on the all-time scoring list.

Billheimer, a senior, was a first team all-Landmark Conference last year and has been the Landmark player of the week three times. She is a key to the Eagles defending their league title.

She scored three goals and added an assist in a 5-0 win over Moravian to help Juniata improve to 8-5 overall, 4-1 in the league. She has 14 goals and eight assists and 39 goals in her career.

Cuttic to Rider: Elyse Cuttic said she thinks about the magical ride the Bethlehem Catholic softball team went on last spring "all the time."

That ride resulted in the Golden Hawks winning the first state title in the program's history, the PIAA 3A gold that was finalized with a 2-0 win over Trinity at Penn State's Beard Field on June 12.

Cuttic, the team's star pitcher, loves

thinking about the past, but she's also excited about the future.

And that future includes continuing her academic and softball career at Rider University.

Cuttic recently announced her collegiate decision so that she can concentrate on the rest of her senior year.

"A huge weight is now off my shoulders," she said. "I am glad the decision has been made and I can enjoy the rest of the showcases I have with my travel team and not feel any pressure. I can also look forward to the start of the high school season."

Cuttic will accept partial scholarship from Rider after considering the University of California-Davis, Quinnipiac and Kutztown.

Rider has the sports management program that Cuttic desires. Her goal is a career as an athletic director.

Another factor in Cuttic's decision was that her travel team teammate, Maddie Chain, is a freshman at Rider.

"There were a number of factors in my decision and one is that it was close enough to home so that my parents could come and see me play and also there is a great chance for me to play and contribute immediately," Cuttic said. "I didn't want to go somewhere where I would have to sit and wait for two years. That was a big factor."

Rider, in Lawrenceville, N.J., was 12-35 last season, 6-14 in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference.

Becahi went 19-7 last season when Cuttic missed more than a month after undergoing surgery to have her appendix removed.

The team struggled toward the end of the regular season, but got hot at just the right time.

"I will be honest with you, I never thought we'd even get out of districts," she said. "I wasn't able to pitch and I was beginning to think I'd have to wait until my senior year.

But Alexa Panuccio did a great of pitching and got us into the state playoffs and then I was able to come back. It was just amazing story."

Cuttic is coming off an 8-2 season that featured three state playoff wins and a save in the District II championship game. Her appendix surgery limited her to 63 innings. She finished with an ERA of 1.75.

As a sophomore in 2014, she was 16-6 with a 1.44 ERA and had 116 strikeouts in 141 innings. She pitched a no-hitter against Radnor in the PIAA 3A quarterfinals on a journey that led to a state runner-up finish.

Cuttic said that she and her teammates have already talked about making history and would love to become the first area softball program to win back-to-back state titles.

The road back to Penn State is a long one, but Becahi will enter the 2016 season as a favorite in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference and District II because everybody from the 2015 team returns.

Special tournament: The Freedom High girls basketball team is sponsoring the first Lorie Dosedlo Memorial Basketball Tournament on Oct. 31 and Nov. 1. Proceeds from the tournament will go to the Patriots girls basketball program and toward a college scholarship that will be awarded to a Freedom senior.

Lorie Dosedlo is the late wife of Bethlehem Police Department lieutenant Bill Dosedlo.

Mrs. Dosedlo died in March 2013 at the age of 45. Her daughter, Brenna, was a standout player at Freedom who graduated in 2014 and played last season at Penn State-Lehigh Valley.

For more information, go to the Freedom girls basketball Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/fhsladypates>.