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Mikolas outlook with Yanks upbeat

BY JEFFREY ZAMPANTI
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After spending two straight seasons in rookie ball, Bradford graduate Nathan Mikolas believes there's plenty of work to be done before he's considered a prospect in the New York Yankees' minor league system.

There are others in the organization, however, who believe he's already there.

The 2012 third-round draft pick followed a rough professional debut with a promising follow-up season under the close eye of the Yankees' Gulf Coast League (Fla.) manager Mario Garza.

"The Yankees made a great selection with him," Garza said. "He's a strong kid with a great left-handed swing.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

After a strong season in the Gulf Coast League, New York Yankees minor-leaguer Nathan Mikolas, a Bradford graduate, will compete for a roster spot with the Charleston (S.C.) RiverDogs of the Single-A South Atlantic League next spring.

They already knew he could defensively and with his base hit and he made great strides running as well. He's right on

track. No question."

Mikolas batted .256 (50-for-195) in the regular season and led the team in home runs (5), RBI (35), games (55) and at-bats (195), while finishing tied for second in hits (50), second in walks (25), third in doubles (12), fourth in runs (27) and sixth in stolen bases (6).

Tough conditions

With games played at the Yankees' spring training facility in Tampa, Fla., in front of few fans and stifling heat, the GCL is one of the most difficult environments in all of the minor leagues.

Mikolas never complained about it.

"Being there another year really helped me," said Mikolas, who will spend the off-

season in Kenosha. "In high school, I did a lot of things incorrectly and got away with it because I could. When you get to pro ball, your weaknesses show quickly."

After a strong season in the GCL, Mikolas will compete for a roster spot with the Charleston (S.C.) RiverDogs of the Single-A South Atlantic League next spring. He could make his full-season debut as a 20-year-old.

The path to Yankee Stadium will include likely stops at Tampa (high-A), Trenton (AA) and Scranton Wilkes-Barre (AAA).

"There was nothing wrong with him repeating (the GCL)," Garza said. "He has a great chance of making (Charleston) next year and a

lot of times you'll see bigger offensive numbers once they get to (Single-A). He's doing great."

Big-league visitors

The Gulf Coast League is often a stop for major leaguers sent on rehabilitation assignments. Yankees' stars Curtis Granderson, Alex Rodriguez, Mark Teixeira, Kevin Youkilis, Andy Pettitte and Mario Rivera spent time at the team's training facility this season.

"Just seeing their work ethic inspires you," Mikolas said. "If they're in the big leagues making millions and they're working harder than I am, something is wrong. It just shows how hard you have to work to get there."

Neal steps up for Packers

GREEN BAY (AP) — Mike Neal's comfort level at his new position is being quickly put to the test by the Packers.

Green Bay drafted him in 2010 as a defensive lineman. This year, he transitioned to outside linebacker. Now he'll need to assume even more responsibility with four-time Pro Bowler Clay Matthews expected to miss at least a couple weeks with a broken right thumb.

Pressure? Only if it's in reference to rushing the quarterback. Neal is coming off what he termed the best game of his career after six tackles and a sack against Detroit last week. "Nothing really," Neal said Wednesday when asked how much Matthews' absence would change the defense. "We're going to miss Clay. Clay brings a lot of stuff to the table ... We're not going to be able to mimic what Clay (does) but we can control what we do, and as long as we do that, we'll be fine."

Linebacker Brad Jones will sit out Sunday in Baltimore with a hamstring injury. Coach Mike McCarthy said he doesn't think Jones will be out long.

Jones' replacement, Robert Francois, suffered a season-ending Achilles injury Sunday. On Wednesday, backup outside linebacker Andy Mulumba missed practice with a sore ankle, though McCarthy said he's hopeful he can go today.



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KENOSHA NEWS PHOTO BY BRIAN PASSINO

Carthage triumphs

Carthage's Ryan Crane launches a shot for a goal against Augustana at Art Keller Field on Wednesday night. Carthage won, 2-1, in overtime. Story on Page B3.

Girardi agrees to 4-year contract with Yankees

BY ERIK BOLAND
NEWSDAY

Conventional wisdom was that Joe Girardi had the leverage in his negotiations with the Yankees. The deal officially announced Wednesday proved it.

Girardi agreed to a four-year contract worth \$16 million that, if certain postseason incentives are met, could be worth even more.

It makes him baseball's second highest-paid manager — behind the Angels' Mike Scioscia, who makes \$5 million a season — but the most striking part of the package is the fourth year. It was something suggested by those representing Girardi, who previously signed a pair of three-year deals, and the Yankees agreed.

"It's a special place to manage because of the opportunities you have every year, the tools that they give you," Girardi said. "Just to be able to put on the pinstripes, as a coach, a player, a manager, I think is special."

Girardi played for the Yankees from 1996-99. Should he finish the contract, he will end up being their manager for 10 years. He said that appealed not only to him, but also to his family, with whom he spent much of the week discussing



Joe Girardi

the next step in his career.

"You hear stuff and you think about things," Girardi said, speaking specifically of the interest of his hometown team, the Cubs. "But our lives have been here for six years. And to be able to stay as a manager of a professional baseball team ... if you have an opportunity to spend 10 years in one city and watch your family grow is extremely lucky. I think that's important, I think stability is important."

The lure of Chicago

The pull of Chicago was very real for Girardi, multiple sources inside and outside the organization said.

The native of Peoria, Ill., grew up rooting for the Cubs and made his MLB debut with them in 1989. They were interested in speaking with him and prepared to match their interest with money.

The Yankees did not give the Cubs or the Nationals permission to speak with Girardi, whose three-year deal didn't expire until the end of the month. Girardi said that was fine with him and that he never asked the Yankees for permission to be granted.

"Chicago is special to me and I think it will always be special to me," Girardi said. "It will always hold a special place in my heart, but this place is really special to me, too. This place has been really wonderful for our family."

Christian Life football team to return to action

BY ANDREW HORSCHAK
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After a one-week hiatus, the Christian Life football team will resume its first varsity season.

Due to academic reasons and injuries, the Eagles forfeited last week's Midwest Classic Conference game against first-place Messmer-Shorewood (although Messmer-Shorewood ended up salvaging its homecoming with a 31-12 victory over CLS in a varsity reserve game at Shorewood High School).

In search of its first varsity victory, Christian Life will entertain HOPE Christian 1 p.m. Saturday at Ameche Field.

"Things look good," Christian Life athletic director Steve Powell said on Wednesday. "I would say 100 percent."

The forfeited varsity game was the first by a Kenosha County football team since St. Joseph had to forfeit the final five



Steve Powell

games of the 2007 season due to a rash of injuries and a small roster loaded with underclassmen.

Going forward

"The football program is going to go forward," Powell said. "It's pretty upbeat still."

"Actually, I think the publicity is going to help us more than hurt us. As I reflect back to St. Joe's a couple years ago, boy, those guys took off right after that."

"Sometimes when people see that a program is hurting, they say, 'Well, maybe we can go and help them.' We're trusting that things will continue to go forward."

CLS is scheduled to play Lake Country Lutheran in its final regular-season game on Oct. 18 at Central High School in Paddock Lake.

"Coach (Dwayne) Carr has a very positive outlook and he's encouraging the kids," Powell said. "The whole situation is kind of put behind us. We're going forward and we're happy with it."

Shoreland Lutheran vs. St. Catherine's

When: 7 tonight

Where: Horlick Field (1648 N. Memorial Dr., Racine)



Records: St. Catherine's is 5-0 in the Metro Classic Conference (6-1 overall), while Shoreland is 0-5 in the Metro Classic (1-6 overall).

Series note: The Angels have won five of the six meetings vs. the Pacers. St. Catherine's won 57-6 last season after jumping out to a 44-0 halftime lead.

Player to watch: After struggling to stay healthy in his two years at Shoreland after transferring from Racine Case, Shoreland senior running back/outside linebacker **Anthony Poling** is "one of the few healthy guys we have left this season," according to Shoreland coach Paul Huebner, noting that Poling will start at running back. "Anthony will run hard when we call his number as he's been looking forward to this opportunity all season," Huebner said.

Key stat: Injuries have taken a toll on the Shoreland roster. The Pacers still have all seven seniors, but they are down to one healthy junior (out of eight) and eight sophomores (out of 12). "We've lost eight varsity players who would start on at least one side of the ball if not both," Huebner said. "It's been rough, but the kids are hanging in there and are looking forward to competing with the big boys (St. Catherine's and St. Joseph) the last two weeks. Obviously we'd rather not have all the injury issues we've had in the last couple weeks, but it does give other kids the opportunity to step up and take on challenging roles."

FYI: St. Catherine's brings a 17-game conference winning streak into the contest. The Angels were ranked No. 8 among Small Division schools in the latest Associated Press state poll.

Andrew Horschak

FOOTBALL POLL WEEK 5 BALLOT

PICK A WINNER

1. Tremper Rac. Park
2. Franklin Indian Trail
3. Del.-Darlen Central
4. Wilmot Burlington
5. Dominican St. Joseph
6. Oak Creek Bradford
7. Wheaton Carthage
8. Michigan Penn State
9. Indiana Michigan St.
10. Nebraska Purdue
11. Packers Ravens
12. Lions Browns
13. Panthers Vikings
14. Raiders Chiefs

TIEBREAKER, PREDICT SCORE

15. N'westrn __, Wisconsin __

Name _____

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Phone _____

Ballots must be submitted to the News by 7 p.m. Friday. Ballots can be mailed to the Kenosha News (5800 Seventh Ave., Kenosha, 53140) as long as they reach us by Friday's deadline. One entry per person per household please. The ballot will also be available online at kenoshanews.com.