

Aurora native played major role in historic year for UBC

Relief pitcher and Aurora native Adam Khan played a key-role in his freshman year as the University of British Columbia Thunderbirds finished with the second-best result in the program's history.

The Thunderbirds are the only school in Canada to take part in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). The team travels south of the border to take on schools from the United States in a highly touted competitive league that has seen numerous players in the past drafted into Major League Baseball.

"The baseball is pretty spectacular, especially for someone in their first year. Getting to see the program and how we did. You know, realizing what we did is the second-best result in UBC baseball history," Khan said, as he reflected on his time in the west coast.

"Being a part of that was really special and I really appreciate it. Looking back, we have something here that we can do even more with next year and in the years to come."

The Thunderbirds capped off the year with a 33-26 record and were one win shy of qualifying for the NAIA World Series.

At the beginning of the season, things weren't quite so fine and dandy for the team and especially for Khan. The 6-foot-4 right-hander, who came out of the Toronto Mets program, struggled in his first few appearances against Arizona Christian, Benedictine Mesa and Antelope Valley.

"You look at the first three outings, even the first four outings of the year, I was shaky. Definitely did not do what I hold myself to. You know, letting up runs. It was all because of lack of confidence and falling behind the counts. That kind of was just a point for me to say, "Hey, let's look at these outings here and say what did we do wrong here?" Khan said.

"I had another shake up against the College of Idaho after another few outings, which happened after a couple of good outings."

Working with his pitching coach Mitch Hodge, Khan began to turn things around. He's the type of guy who knows what he's capable of and simply doesn't make an excuse for poor performances. He re-instilled belief he can do it, and ever since that hiccup on March 18 against the college of Idaho, Khan posted incredible numbers for the rest of the season.

Khan would go on to make 11 appearances, throwing for 21.1 innings, recording one earned run, five walks, 14 strikeouts, and posting a 0.42 ERA.

In this stretch, he played a pivotal role in the 2-0 victory against the Vancouver Canadians, who are the high-A affiliate of the Toronto Blue Jays.

"I've had great experiences against division one baseball teams before, but playing against a legitimate minor league team, in a minor league stadium in front of 3,000 fans in attendance was something really special. Especially because I got to pitch in that game," Khan said.

"Our pitching staff was unbelievable. Myself, I had a quick three-up, three-down inning. Held them to making sure we kept the lead. It was something pretty crazy experience and definitely something I'll never forget."

Skipping over to the NAIA Opening Round, the Thunderbirds had to take on Lewis-Clark State College and had to defeat the team twice in order to qualify into the World Series. Having gone 0-7 against them throughout the year, the Thunderbirds won the first game 7-4 and lost the second game 6-3.

In what was a remarkable year for Khan, who became the first option out of the bullpen over junior and senior players, he quickly

became the go-to man in the eighth inning.

He received high-praise from head coach Chris Pritchett and is looking forward to this upcoming season to continue to get better and make an even more substantial impact with this group.

By Robert Belardi