

Aurora pitcher set to toss in NCAA's top division



By Jake Courtepatte

Alexander MacKinnon was a key component of Aurora baseball's successful first-ever Midget AAA season in 2013, and he is bringing that same winning attitude to the NCAA next season.

MacKinnon is believed to be the first ever grad of the Aurora minor baseball system to earn a spot on a Division I team, the best collegiate ball in the United States.

A graduate of St. Maximilian Catholic High School in Aurora, many schools in the USA offered MacKinnon opportunities over the course of the past year, but he made his final choice after a series of visits with the Niagara Purple Eagles and their coaching staff.

Of note is the significant number of Canadians that the Eagles recruit, calling our country their backyard as it relates to finding talent. The team's roster includes players from Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario, as well as from across the United States. MacKinnon confirmed his attendance in March of this year.

A starter for Team Ontario, MacKinnon knows that he will have to learn the ropes in Division 1 and fill any need the team requires over the full season.

"It will be a challenge for sure, said MacKinnon, "but I have had terrific coaching through Aurora and Team 'O' that I think has set me up to meet the intense circumstances that will come along."

This season MacKinnon has faced numerous high MLB draftees with success, so he knows he can compete at this level, but he takes nothing for granted.

"I will need to continue to learn about the game, the mental approach necessary, and continue to develop my physical capabilities."

MacKinnon was the first Aurora player to ever win the Ferguson Jenkins Award, for adult pitcher of the year, in 2013.

The Purple Eagles play 56 games throughout the US, including their loop, the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference, and teams at large. This year's team played games against Notre Dame, Alabama, Penn State and Boston College to name a few.

Niagara's academics were also a factor in MacKinnon's decision as all of the credits are transferable to Ontario's university level, ensuring that all doors remain open whatever may happen after his Niagara tenure.

He is also quick to thank all of the volunteers who coach, organize, and umpire in Aurora Minor Ball, especially Dave Giroux, who

provided the opportunity to pursue his dream, and also thanks to coaches Jason Booth and Kyle MacKay for their guidance with Team Ontario.

Playing in the Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference, MacKinnon will be looking to turn around a baseball program that was last conference champs in 1997.