

## Aurora resident and University of West Virginia Mountaineer Sam White signs free agent deal with the Toronto Blue Jays

Aurora's Sam White capped off a terrific collegiate baseball career last week by signing a free agent deal with the Toronto Blue Jays.

The Aurora High School graduate starred at the University of West Virginia over the last three years and rolled up impressive numbers for the Mountaineers. White hit .310 with 168 hits, 33 doubles, 19 home runs and 111 RBI in 161 NCAA Division 1 games—roughly the equivalent of an MLB season.

Despite those gaudy offensive numbers, White was not selected in this summer's truncated MLB draft. The former Aurora-King Jay was batting over .400 when he tore his labrum after hitting a home run this Spring. Despite the injury, White led the Mountaineers with a sparkling .361 batting average in 2025 and the Jays took a chance on him when other Major League clubs were not as inclined to draft an injured collegiate player.

White described his feelings about signing with Toronto's major league club: "It was awesome, especially because it was with the Jays. It meant so much more to me to play for the organization I've cheered for my entire life. When the draft didn't work out, it was big relief to have an offer from the Jays."

The Jays were clearly impressed with White's body of work in West Virginia. He complemented his power bat by playing left field, right field, second base, first base, third base, and catcher over his three years with the emerging NCAA Division 1 powerhouse.

While White enjoyed defending all over the diamond for the Mountaineers, he acknowledged in our phone interview from Dunedin that he did have a favorite defensive position.

"I liked playing second base, for sure. I like being up the middle. The ball is in your hands more and you can play a bigger part of the game."

Coincidentally, that is what the Jays' coaching staff in Florida have suggested will be his primary position in the organization.

"The Jays see me as a second baseman or third baseman. I'll be ready to play there for Spring Training once my shoulder is rehabbed and I go through all the graduated steps to get back to throwing, fielding, and swinging the bat again over the Winter."

White is currently rehabbing in Dunedin after he had "major shoulder surgery about three weeks ago."

"It was performed by our West Virginia team doctor on June 26. I'll be ready to go for next Spring. The only thing I am allowed to do right now is biking."

Despite the frustration of not being able to throw or swing for the next twelve weeks and being restricted with a brace for at least the next six weeks, White's journey back to health has been shared with fellow Mountaineer and Jays pitcher Alek Manoah who is scheduled to return to Toronto's pitching staff in August.

"I met Alek at Russell Martin's retirement party and we've been training together in the facility over the last few weeks. He saw me play in the Clemson Regional and really liked how I played in the regional playoff games. I was happy he knew my name."

In addition to creating a baseball bond with a fellow Mountaineer in Dunedin, White reflected on his favorite moments as a University of West Virginia ballplayer.

"Most recently, winning the Clemson Regional in the Spring. We beat Clemson and then Kentucky twice—we won all three games with comebacks. In my freshman year, we set a Mountaineers record for wins in a season with 41. We broke that record this year

with 44 wins. It was exciting to be on teams that were making school history. My sophomore year, we hit the most home runs of any UWV team. We had so many achievements as a team over the last three years.?

After a successful career with the Mountaineers, the former Team Ontario Astro shortstop described the thrill of signing with the Blue Jays as a player born and raised in Canada.

?That means the world to me. The Jays were my favorite team growing up and it feels so good to enter the Complex in Dunedin and seeing the giant Blue Jays logo with the Maple Leaf in it. It's a great feeling as a Canadian to be in the Jays organization.?

As a Canadian playing in West Virginia since 2022, White felt one of the reasons for his success at the NCAA Division 1 level was the consistency of his college coaching staff.

?We had coaching consistency in my three years. It definitely contributed to our team success and it was huge for me to have a comfortable setting in my freshman year. Steve Sabins was our Assistant Coach when he recruited me and then he became our Head Coach in my third year. It was great to be supported.?

Coach Sabins and veteran players like White led the Mountaineers to both a Big 12 regular season championship and an NCAA tournament regional title in 2025. White's father, Todd, praised the University of West Virginia coaching staff for showing him that his son was ready to be a professional ballplayer.

?It was just the way the coaches talked to him and about him. They said Sam was the team leader. Under their direction, Sam got better every year. Getting to D1 was quite an achievement in itself, but the coaches saw Sam as a pro player?and they thought he was someone that the younger players could look up to and they were encouraged to imitate Sam's work ethic.?

The longtime resident of Aurora described what went through his mind when his son signed as a free agent with the Jays: ?It was mostly relief for him. Sam worked very hard in West Virginia. The second day of the draft was an up and down roller coaster of a day for him and Sam hasn't had much disappointment as an athlete. However, the Jays had spoken to him two days before the draft so he had that in his back pocket. I was so happy for him to have that option and I hope to see him up with the big club someday.?

When Todd White was asked about the best part of seeing his son sign a professional baseball contract, he expressed his own kind of relief: ?He can pay his own bills now!?

**By Jim Stewart**