

Catching Up With Kannapolis Intimidators Pitcher Joe Serafin

Contributed by Shane Bufano
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Recently we caught up with Kannapolis Intimidators southpaw Joseph Serafin. Serafin, who once pitched for the University of Vermont (2006-2009) has found success after being drafted by the Chicago White Sox organization in the 2009 Amateur Draft. The lefty from Tariffville, Connecticut began his career with the Bristol Sox after being drafted where he shimmered posting a 4-1 record, 1.64 ERA, striking out 20 batters in 33 innings. His success in conjunction with the White Sox sending 4 pitching prospects to the San Diego Padres for All-Star Jake Peavy on the July 31st MLB Trade Deadline, opened the door for Serafin to be called up to low-A Kannapolis in his first professional year. Since then, Serafin has pitched well for the Intimidators with a record of 1-1 in 4 starts (as of 8/20/09), with a 2.78 ERA while accumulating 22Ks in 22.2 innings pitched. Serafin found some time in his busy schedule to catch up with me and let his fans in Vermont know a little bit about life after UVM as a Minor League Baseball player.

SB - Our Vermont Sports Network fans have been tracking you and are glad to see you are having such great success in the White Sox farm system, what has been the biggest factor that has contributed to your success after a tough final season at UVM?

JS - The biggest factor that has contributed to my success with the White Sox is throwing first pitch strikes and getting ahead in the count. The White Sox stress this more than anything, and by getting ahead in the count meaning 0-2 or 1-2, your pitch count will stay low allowing for you to be in the game. The manager at Bristol (rookie ball) was also very pleased with my tempo to work fast and keep the tempo of the game going.

SB - Who was the first person you called/texted when you found out you got called up to Kannapolis?

JS - The story is kind of funny. My parents and girlfriend were coming down to Bristol, VA for a week to come see me pitch. They were planning on leaving around 7pm. I was out to dinner with some of my teammates when my manager Ryan Newman called and said I was not pitching tomorrow as I was supposed to, but would be Sunday with the Low A team. I immediately called my parents and told them to not come to Bristol because I was meeting the team on the road in Ohio. They decided to take a right turn and head out to Ohio so I did get to see them eventually.

SB - How much lag time was there between the final out of your UVM season, and from when you went down to Bristol?

JS - There was about 2 weeks or so between UVM's last game in the America East Tourney and the draft. I was taken the 3rd and last day. But by the time the scout contacted me, which was on Friday, I was on a plane that Wednesday to unknown Bristol, VA. I had continued to throw and work out between those dates with Bill Currier and his son Bryce who caught a couple bull pens for me.

SB - What's the biggest change for you from playing College ball to Minor League ball?

JS - The biggest change from college ball to pro ball I'd have to say is that baseball becomes your life. Sure I had days in college where I would be at the ballpark for a good 5 hours. Now I'm at the park every day for about 8-10 hours. You eat, sleep, and play baseball. From the game standpoint I would have to say that you can't make mistakes here. Most pitchers throw 90 plus and with my mid 80mph fastball I need to make sure I hit corners and keep the ball away from the middle of the strike zone. I have learned a few times with balls smoked by my ear on the mound and a ball hit into the night.

SB - Since being drafted who is the most famous player/coach that you have met?

JS - While I was playing in rookie ball, our hitting coach was Jerry Hairston who played in the Big Leagues for a number of years, and he has two sons right now that are playing in the big leagues. Freddy Garcia also made a couple rehab appearances while I was there. I actually got to play catch with him one day which was unbelievable. Right now in Kannapolis our manager

Ernie Young played in AAA and in the majors off an on. I think he is the all time career home run leader for the minors. Ryan Braun is also on our team who played a couple years in the Bigs for the Royals. Not the hitter but the pitcher Ryan Braun. Its exciting to be around the people who played in the Bigs because I get to study them and learn from them by how they handle themselves on and off the field, and how they work while on the field.

SB - Do you stay in close contact with your former UVM teammates (Milo) who is in Staten Island, and (Albert) playing in Yakima? If so, what notes have you compared about succeeding in the MILB?

JS - I have stayed in a little contact with Milo and Albert but its hard with very little free time and they have busy schedules as well

SB - What is your typical day like on the day of a game you are starting?

JS - Typical start day for me...I show up at the game around 5:30 for a 7:05 game. I get there usually have a PB&J and relax listening to music. Then I get dressed and do our shoulder program that we do everyday around 6. I am out on the field around 6:30 to start stretching and long toss. I get on the bullpen mound around 6:50 and make sure my pitches are sharp. By 7:05 I'm ready to go. After I'm done pitching we go back to the locker room and get a 20 min cardio in or 1000 jump ropes to flush out. Then shower up and watch the rest of the game from beyond the outfield or wherever the clubhouse may be.

SB - Who has the better night life... Kannapolis or Burlington?

JS - Better night life. Haha, I would def have to say Burlington. Kannapolis is small and there's not much going on. Burlington, I miss and I will be back up there sometime soon.

SB - The Intimidators and Bristol Sox websites listed you as Joseph Serafin. At UVM you were either Joey, or Joe. Is this a new you, or do the guys call you Joey?

JS - Most rosters do say Joseph. But I'm still the same old Joe or Joey whatever works, haha

SB - Since joining the White Sox organization, what is one aspect of your game that has changed or been helped the most?

JS - Since joining the White Sox I have continued to be the same crafty lefty who hits my spots and changes speeds with my curveball, and sometimes a good change up. One day in Bristol during a bullpen (session) my pitching coach taught me how to throw a sinker/2seam fast ball that tails away and sinks from a right handed hitter. This new pitch allows me to get ground balls in 2-0 counts and I throw it mostly with runners on base to give my infielders a chance to turn a double play. It has been very successful so far.

SB - What do you consider your out pitch?

JS - My out pitch is still my curveball, which i usually get swing and misses, or sometimes weak ground balls in the infield. I also like to sneak an outside fastball at the knees for the strikeout. Getting an 86 mph fastball by a professional hitter is a great feeling knowing that all other pitchers are throwing harder than low 90s.

SB - What has been your favorite visiting team's stadium so far?

JS - When playing in the Appalachian league I did not see many stadiums that were too out of the ordinary. My first game in Low A, we were in Lakeland County, Ohio and their stadium was amazing. There was about 8,000 fans every game there and the park had a Megatron with replays and highlights and all the works of a big league Megatron. It was awesome.

SB - Thanks for spending some time with us Joe. To keep up following Joe, and to check out his stats, visit the Kannapolis Intimidators website at the link below.

Joseph Serafin Kannapolis Intimidators- [Click Here](#)