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## Virginia Tech players make immediate impact for Miners

*By Gary Fauber*

**Register-Herald Assistant Sports Editor**

— Chris Kay didn't have the greatest of debuts Tuesday in his first game with the West Virginia Miners.

Nothing bad, but he wasn't exactly comfortable trying to nail basestealers in what turned out to be a 9-1 win over Lorain County. The Ironmen stole three bases and Kay had a throwing error.

The next day, he went to manager Tim Epling about it.

"It's funny. He said, 'Coach, I throw better off my knees. What do you want me to do?'" Epling said. "I said, 'Throwoff your knees.'"

With Epling at the controls, being a West Virginia Miner is all about comfort. Kay and Virginia Tech teammates Joe Parsons and Brent Zimmerman joined the team four games into the season, but they have already begun contributing as if they have been around since the beginning.

The Hokies' successful season ended Monday with elimination from the NCAA regionals. Less than 24 hours later, Parsons, Kay and Zimmerman were in Beckley, getting ready for their West Virginia debut. It could have been a rough transition, but it hasn't.

"It wasn't too bad," said Parsons, who was the winning pitcher on Tuesday. "I only live an hour and a half up the road and this is my third year of summer ball, so I kind of know what the atmosphere is like. So it wasn't hard to step in."

"Not really," Zimmerman said. "We did have a real good season, ranked Top 25 pretty much all throughout (the season). But making the change wasn't too bad. We have a great coaching staff and a great bunch of guys. So it wasn't too bad."

Kay, who hit a two-run homer in Wednesday's 10-4 win over the Ironmen, said comfort simply comes down to playing the game.

"Both times, you're just trying to have fun and just play baseball hard," he said. "Every time I play and practice, I try to go as hard as I do in games so it's more natural and just comes to me."

Zimmerman has driven in three runs in two games, but his seamless play at third base really stands out.

"Defense has always been a big part of my game, ever since I started playing," he said. "I've always taken

pride in my defense. I help out my pitchers as much as I can.”

“And he pitches, too,” Epling said. “We kind of got him as a pitcher. But he is a heck of a (defensive player). I talked to (Virginia Tech assistant) coach Dave Turgeon and he said that he was a good fielder. He may be their best shortstop. So we stuck him over at third base and he has done a good job.

“And that kind of opens a lot of things up. I feel real safe in the outfield with what we have, (although) we’ve still got a few kinks to work out.”

As for his play behind the plate, Kay’s second game was definitely better than his first. Throwing from his knees, Kay gunned down two runners trying to steal second and caught another at third.

“I threw (Tuesday) from my feet and air-mailed it, so I decided to go from my knees,” he said. “I felt more comfortable. I felt like I had some good throws. I had to do a little work before the game to get my transfers down. But I felt like if I could just play catch with the second baseman, I would be all right.”

Having teammates they are familiar with certainly helps with the comfort.

“I think for Jake (Peeling, who made his Miners debut Thursday night against the Chillicothe Paints) and Joe it’s a lot easier on me to catch them because I know them more,” Kay said. “Having a guy like Zimm at third base, who I know I can rely on. The more people you know, the friendlier you become, you get that team camaraderie and you feel better. You have that trust in everybody in front of you and behind you. Second base, short, you’ve just got more trust.”

“It makes it real comfortable,” Zimmerman said. “We’ve got a great stadium out here. All turf, the ball bounces good. It makes everything pretty easy. We’ve got a good group of guys here with the Miners.”

— E-mail: [gfauber@register-herald.com](mailto:gfauber@register-herald.com)