

SPORTS & LEISURE

Can Shawn Hill make it back to the big leagues?

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

Rehabbing from bow surgery in four years, Shawn Hill some-a certain film star-



his second major elbow surgery in four years, Georgetown's times feels like he's in ring Bill Murray.

The 29-year-old starting pitcher is trying to get back into Major League shape in Dunedin, Fla. with the Toronto Blue Jays' single-A affiliate in the Florida State League, although he's currently not on the farm club's roster.

Hill signed with the Jays in January in hopes of rekindling a promising career that's been set back by two Tommy John elbow reconstruction surgeries on his right throwing arm.



Georgetown's Shawn Hill takes to the mound with the Toronto Blue Jays' single-A affiliate Dunedin squad during a recent Florida State League game.

Submitted photos

Cautious about setting any dates or goals or getting too optimistic about his recovery, the 6-foot-2, 225-pound sinkerball specialist has been throwing batting practice and in simulated games in Dunedin, and if all goes well he could see action with the single-A Jays in the next couple of weeks.

"I'm going through the *Groundhog Day* thing again," Hill said in a phone interview, referring to Murray's movie about a TV weather reporter who finds himself living the same day over and over.

"It's been up and down. I was throwing well in January and February and then I felt like I had a dead arm for two or three weeks there. Things are starting to ramp up again and my velocity is between 87 to 89 (miles an hour) on my fastball, which is okay, but a tick low for where I want to be. There are no real set goals because we did that before and it

Often-injured Georgetown hurler taking it one start at a time for Jays' farm team

can become frustrating, and unfortunately I've learned how to deal with it. Right now— I know it's cliché— but we're just taking it one start at a time. The light is there and we're just looking to get back in a

timely manner."

Hill actually almost joined his hometown team last spring after discussions with then assistant GM Alex Anthopoulos, but instead signed with the San Diego Padres for three starts, posting a 1-1 record before more soreness and swelling caused him to undergo his second Tommy John operation since 2004.

The Bishop Reding High School grad said he didn't ponder retirement, but went through some frustrating times, keeping in mind how well he pitched during his best season in 2007 with the last-place Washington Nationals, with whom he went 4-5 with a 3.42 ERA in 16 starts.

"It was an emotional thing, going for the second Tommy John because a lot of guys wouldn't stomach that even one time, but it had been over four years since the first surgery and it just never felt right," Hill added.

"You have to take the attitude that maybe all the headaches and boredom I've gone through with the rehab will pay off, so I'll work hard this year and let's hope this will get rid of the problem altogether so we can move forward. When I was taking two Percocets before every start in '08 and there was a lot of pain and discomfort, there were times when I thought, 'Why am I doing this,' and I was miserable away from the park too. I'm

thankful that my wife Ashley and my family have really supported me through all of it."

During spring training in Dunedin, Hill worked out with many of the Major League Jays including hurler Dustin McGowan, a once top prospect who is going through a similar rehabilitation to his own. With Toronto trading ace Roy 'Doc' Halladay during the off-season and turning to a youth movement, the chance to play for the team he grew up cheering for was tough to pass up.

"As soon as they got rid of 'Doc' Halladay, all of a sudden a lot of innings had to be eaten up by a pretty young group of guys, and not that they're not all legit arms, but they're not Doc Halladay," he said.

"There's definitely an opportunity to be had if I can get back to throwing consistently the way I know I can. If things progress at single-A, then I could be at double-A or triple-A looking forward to the end of the season. It all depends on how the arm feels."

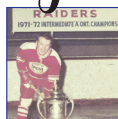


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