



Baseball Canada photo

Georgetown's Ben Abram was the youngest player to see game action for Canada at the Pan Am Games. Abram brought home a silver medal, but more importantly, valuable experience and lessons from a Canadian team and coaching staff that included several former big league pitchers.

PAN AM MEDAL SILVER, BUT EXPERIENCE GOLDEN FOR ABRAM

Ben Abram has always been attracted to the role where he could have the biggest impact on a game.

When he started playing hockey, Abram naturally gravitated toward the net where he threw himself in front of pucks. It was the same in soccer. When he was introduced to baseball, someone - or more accurately, something - had the job he coveted.

Pitching machines handled the central aspect of the game. But the following season when players took over the pitching chores, Abram volunteered for the role and quickly excelled.

"I've always gravitated toward the high-pressure positions," he said.

So when Canadian manager Ernie Whitt handed the 19-year-old the ball against Puerto Rico, the eventual gold medalists, in a pool play game at the Pan Am Games, it was a situation Abram welcomed.

"It was awesome coming in," said Abram, the youngest player on the Canadian team to see action in Peru. "I knew I wasn't going to be the first guy out of the pen, I understood that. But to get to go out and play was an amazing experience."

Abram pitched 1 2/3 in-

nings, giving up a hit, a walk and two runs. His pitching line took an unfortunate hit when the second run scored after he left with two out and a runner on first.

Canada went on to earn a silver medal, beating Nicaragua 10-0 to advance to the final before falling 6-1 to Puerto Rico in the championship game.

Abram had a chance to represent his country before, as a junior at the Under-18 World Cup and the Under-18 Pan American Championships, where Canada won bronze. But making his debut with the senior team was a much different experience.

"You're playing with grown men who have played a few levels ahead of you," said Abram, who despite not falling into that grown man category just yet has, at six-foot-seven and 265 pounds, done more growing than any player on the Canadian roster.

Abram realizes there is still much room to grow on the mound, and he took full advantage of his time at the Pan Am Games. With a manager who caught more than 1,000 major league games, two former major-league pitchers on the coaching staff and four

more on the roster, there was a wealth of knowledge at his disposal. While he got some tips on things like different grips, he said it was the mental side where he got the most help.

"Those guys have been around a long time. So just hearing how they react to different situations, how they prepare for games," he said, "just being able to ask questions and learn from them will help me a lot."

He will put what he's learned into action as he heads into his sophomore season at the University of Oklahoma. Abram was drafted by the San Diego Padres in 2018, but he said joining the Sooners was the right decision for him.

"The end goal is to play in the big leagues," said Abram, who went 6-4 with a 4.24 earned-run average in his freshman year. "It's an incredibly hard decision when you see guys making money, but it wasn't the right time for me. I needed to go to college and it's been a great experience. I've gotten a lot better."

Now armed with some experience with the senior national team, it might not be long before Abram's time arrives.

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