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Cecil's no-no highlights inaugural weekend

 [E-Mail This Article](#)**by John Y. Wehmuller**
Staff Writer

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When Brett Cecil made his summer-league debut with the Silver Spring-Takoma Thunderbolts last June, the left-hander was straight out of DeMatha High School. The fact that he was pitching to players with two or three more years of experience didn't seem to matter much -- Cecil posted a 5-3 record and a 1.94 earned-run average last summer.

This June, Cecil arrived back in Thunderbolts camp with a year of Atlantic Coast Conference baseball under his belt. And Sunday night, the University of Maryland hurler made a big statement in his first start of the Cal Ripken, Sr. Collegiate Baseball League season.

"He was very dominant throughout," Thunderbolts manager Bobby St. Pierre said. "He got stronger in the middle innings and late in the game. His command and his stuff got even better. But he was in control from pitch one."

Cecil was so much in command that the College Park Bombers couldn't get a hit off him. The southpaw allowed only three base-runners and faced two over the minimum, striking out nine in a 5-0 Thunderbolts win.

Cecil's no-hitter put an exclamation point on the inaugural weekend of the new Cal Ripken, Sr. League. It took just three days and seven games for the new league to see its first no-no; it was also the first in the six-year history of the Silver Spring-Takoma franchise.

In his freshman season at Maryland, Cecil posted a record of 1-1 with a 3.77 ERA. He made 18 appearances this spring, including four starts, striking out 40 and walking 13 in 43 innings.

Sunday, Cecil didn't issue a base on balls, but did hit two batters. The Thunderbolts also committed one error behind him, but third baseman Matt Capece made several nice plays on dribblers that threatened to turn into infield hits.

The win evened the Thunderbolts' record at 1-1 on the young season. They host the Rockville Express (1-1) Wednesday at 7 p.m. at Blair High School.

"It's still such a feeling-out period, not only with our own team but also in the league," St. Pierre said. "Just two or three games in, we have no feeling for who's going to be at the top, who's going to be at the bottom, and who falls in the middle. That's going to take 10 or 15 games."

One thing that is clear is that, as usual in wood-bat summer ball, the pitching is ahead of the hitting at this point. Cecil's effort against the Bombers was the best of a number of standout pitching performances on opening weekend.

The Bethesda Big Train hosted the CRSL's inaugural game Friday night against the Maryland Orioles, and were shut out, 4-0. The Big Train (2-1) bounced back Saturday and Sunday with strong pitching performances of their own.

On Saturday, lefty Dustin Pease struck out eight and scattered four hits over seven innings to beat the Thunderbolts, 3-1. Ron Lowe followed that up Sunday night with a two-hit shutout of the Express.

"Overall, pitching and defense have been dominating," Big Train manager Sal Colangelo said. "That's what's been winning games for us.

The Big Train's two wins gave them an early lead in the Montgomery Cup, awarded each season to the county team that posts the best record against the others.

Last season, the Cup was contested between just two teams, the Big Train and Thunderbolts. This season, the Express have joined the fray, and celebrated with a 2-0 home win over the Bombers Saturday in their first-ever game.

"It's going great," Rockville manager Tom Shaffer said. "There are always some things you want to do better or fix right away, because it's a brand new team. But we're going about it with the right steps, doing what we have to do as an organization."

Adam Haun picked up the first win in Express history, allowing just one hit over seven innings and striking out eight. Haun carried his own no-hit bid for 6 1/3 innings. Billy Butler and Joe Smith nailed down the win with two perfect innings.

Notes: The Thunderbolts had two players selected last week in the amateur draft. Jeff Bianchi, a shortstop from Pennsylvania, was selected by Kansas City with the second pick in the second round and will never actually play for Silver Spring-Takoma. Left-handed pitcher Craig Pfautz was taken by Arizona in the 16th round, and was scheduled to arrive in Silver Spring Tuesday. Former Thunderbolts starter Mike Billek went to the Cubs in the third round. ... Big Train alumnus Mike Costanzo, the team's MVP in 2003, was selected in the middle of the second round by the Philadelphia Phillies. ... The Thunderbolts visited the Express Tuesday in a game that finished too late to be included in this edition.

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