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## Rockville's Golden guru

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

June 29, 2005

It's not easy to find men who know as much about college baseball as Bill Sizemore. The Rockville Express was fortunate. It was Sizemore who did the looking.

Sizemore is a middle-school teacher from Thousand Oaks, Calif., who likes to teach baseball during his summer breaks. He also happens to be a part-time scout for the Florida Marlins, a former minor-league pitching coach, and a player on two NCAA championship teams from the 1970s.

That's the résumé Sizemore sent out last fall, the one that wound up on the desk of Bruce Adams, president of the Bethesda Big Train. The Big Train already had a pitching coach, but Adams forwarded Sizemore's information on to the rest of the teams in what would soon become the Cal Ripken Sr. Collegiate Baseball League.

"We were the first team to jump on him," Express manager Tom Shaffer said. "I called him. We talked for about an hour. Within the first 10 minutes -- the first five minutes -- I offered him the job."

Sizemore took it, and brought his nearly 30 years of experience coaching young players with him to Knights Field this June. But he brought more than that.

Rockville's roster includes 11 players from California, plus a native of Washington state who plays at Pepperdine (Calif.) University. No other team in the CRSCBL has those kinds of connections on the West Coast, and the Express has Sizemore to thank for it.

"Coach Sizemore invited me out here," said shortstop Steve Braun, a recent Oakland Athletics draftee. "He came out to several of my games at [Pierce] junior college in Los Angeles. He liked the way I played, so he gave me a call and invited me. ... He's a great guy, he knows a lot about the game and I respect him. So once I got the call from him, I jumped right on it."

Sizemore sees a lot of college baseball in Southern California during his rounds with the Marlins. Several of the Golden State natives playing for the Express, like Braun, were invited on his personal observations.

But Sizemore's experience as a scout and minor-league coach gave him more than just a sharp eye for talent. They also earned him a lot of connections, beyond just his home base.



David S. Spence/The Gazette

**Rockville Express pitching coach Tom Sizemore works with starting pitcher Adam Haun before Tuesday's game with Bethesda. Sizemore is a part-time scout with the Florida Marlins, a former minor-leaguer and winner of two national championships as a player at Cal State-Stanislaus.**

"The ones I don't know were recommended by other scouts by sort of putting the word out," Sizemore said. "I got the four kids from Wright State (Ohio) because of [WSU assistant coach] Greg Lovelady. Greg played for us with the Marlins. ... It's just kind of knowing people, you know?"

Sizemore got into coaching right out of college, where he was a pitcher for 1976 and '77 Division III national champion Cal State-Stanislaus. He coached briefly at the high-school level, then spent 11 years as a minor-league pitching instructor with the Seattle Mariners, the Marlins, and a co-op team in Alberta, Canada that was run by Major League Baseball.

Sizemore eventually got out of full-time coaching -- he still conducts private lessons on the side -- but found that his experience in the minors had given him an eye for talent.

"I worked in the New York-Penn League, so I got to see all the new guys coming in, all the guys that were drafted," Sizemore said. "You see what other teams are drafting, so it's very easy to make a comparison when you go out and you watch guys. My question is, 'Could this guy play in the New York-Penn League?' And if the answer's no, then he's not a prospect."

This spring, while he was out scouting collegiate players for the Marlins, Sizemore applied the same criteria to potential members of the Express.

"During the spring, he called me regularly throughout the week, saying he saw so-and-so who would fit well on our roster," Shaffer said. "During the spring, we talked a lot about the roster, and it changed."

Now that the Express is assembled, Sizemore is down to the business of actually coaching the pitching staff. There are 18 players on the roster listed, at least in part, as pitchers.

Though the team, at 4-9, isn't off to the start it hoped, both Shaffer and Sizemore see a lot of potential in the staff, which includes players from top-notch programs like Pepperdine and UC-Santa Barbara.

"I think we've got a real solid staff," Sizemore said. "We have a lot of depth."

"He basically brought in a great staff that have been proven already," Shaffer said. "He brings a wealth of knowledge. The man is very, very smart and he's been around a long time."

So why does he do it? Why does someone with Sizemore's experience travel across four time zones to teach pitching for a first-year team in a first-year league?

"I just like going out in the summertime and being a pitching coach," Sizemore said. "It's fun. That's why I do it."

**Notes:** The Express had a tough week, losing all four of its games to fall to 4-9 heading into Tuesday evening's matchup with the league-leading Bethesda Big Train (10-5). The game finished too late to be included in this edition. Before that, Rockville's most recent outing was a 7-2 loss to the Silver Spring-Takoma Thunderbolts Saturday.

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