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## Blackwood is charming for Rockville Express

Wednesday, June 14, 2006

by John Y. Wehmueller  
 Staff Writer

For the Rockville Express, Scotty Blackwood has been more than just a shortstop — he has been a good-luck charm.

With the Montgomery College-Rockville infielder on the roster last July, the Express closed their Cal Ripken, Sr. Collegiate Baseball League season on a 15-10 run. Blackwood is back with the team this June, and has helped Rockville to a 3-0 start, including a big two-run single in Sunday's 10-7 win over the Maryland Redbirds.

"We're coming together pretty well," Blackwood said. "Everybody gets along. Everyone knows their roles. It's a lot of fun to be out here."

For Blackwood, the first two weeks of this Ripken League season are something of a farewell tour at Knights Stadium. The Quince Orchard graduate was out of baseball, and school, in 2005 after a series of health problems. But he decided to return to the diamond last July, joining up with the Express, managed by his college coach, Tom Shaffer. Blackwood hit .298 in 19 games and helped Rockville overcome a 4-10 start, then had a successful spring at MC-Rockville.

Shaffer penciled Blackwood into his Express lineup again this summer. But Blackwood, bound for Salisbury University in the fall, decided a few months ago to hang up his cleats, for good this time.

"Late in the spring season, he came up to me and said he just wanted to be here for the first couple of weeks while we were waiting for the other guys, and then go to work," Shaffer said.



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 Rockville's Scotty Blackwood fires to first for an out Sunday. He has been one of the catalysts to the Express' 3-0 start.

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“I believe he just wants to go to Salisbury and concentrate on being a teacher.”

Blackwood will leave the team at the end of this week, but Rockville is making the most of its good-luck charm's brief stint. The team's likely middle infield of Ben Orloff and Phil Boscarino are still on the West Coast, wrapping up their seasons at the University of California-Irvine and UC-Riverside, respectively.

In the meantime, Blackwood is helping the Express stay on track while much of the team — also a catcher and several pitchers — filters in from around the country.

“You know the guys that are coming in are going to do well,” Blackwood said. “I didn't come in until halfway through the season last year. It was kind of tough, because I'm coming in where people have been playing together for two months and know each other. It was like, 'I've got to come in and produce, or I'm going back home.' ... These guys will look at it the same way.”

Those players who have made it to Rockville seem to have a knack for winning. On Sunday, the Express fell behind the visiting Redbirds, 4-1 through four innings. But with one out in the bottom of the fifth, catcher Quentin Cate (3 for 3) hit a solo home run, and Maryland's Louis Aguero proceeded to load the bases with two walks and a hit batter. That brought up Blackwood, hitting ninth in the order.

“That's actually the second time in back-to-back games where I've come up with the bases loaded,” Blackwood said. “Shaffer was like, 'Look, this is what's going to happen — you're getting a base hit, the guy on third's scoring, the guy on second's scoring, the guy on first is going to third and you're going to second.' That's the second time that's happened, so I think we're going to put that one in the playbook.”

Blackwood's two-run single tied the game, and he did take second on the throw home. Silver Spring native Ivor Hodgson followed with another two-run single, stole two bases, and scored on a sac fly, putting Rockville ahead, 7-4. The Redbirds immediately tied the game again in the top of the sixth, but Rockville scored three more in the eighth for the win.

On the day, the Express scored 10 runs on just nine hits, milking Redbird pitchers for eight walks and getting hit by four pitches. But five of the nine hits drove in eight of the 10 runs. So far, Shaffer's lineup is coming through in the clutch, a trend carried over from the end of last season.

“We were a second-half team last year because we had to be,” Shaffer said. “We had a slow start, and we had to turn it on at the end if we wanted to do anything in the playoffs. We were fortunate to win 15 of our last 25, but we're trying to avoid that situation this year, and starting off 3-0 helps. Not getting our whole roster here and still starting 3-0 is pretty good.”

Notes: The Express roster lists eight players, including Orloff and Boscarino, from the University of California system, none of whom have arrived yet. Pitcher Chris Maloney, another Quince Orchard graduate, has also not joined the team yet. ... Rockville native Mike Murphy hit the sac fly that drove in Hodgson, and also scored what turned out to be the winning run after leading off the eighth inning with a bunt single. Murphy is currently hitting .583 on the season with one home run and four RBI. ... The Express visits the Silver Spring-Takoma Thunderbolts Wednesday at 7 p.m.

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