

Special Interest Articles:

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Vineland High School
Baseball – Florida trip issue

Spring training trip a success

HEAD COACH JOHN MALATESTA SHARES HIS THOUGHTS:

I thought the Florida spring training trip was a culmination of months of hard work and effort from the coaching staff, parents, athletes and community supporters and allowed our program an opportunity to compete at a higher level at a time of the year when, in all recent years, was attempted at home in cold, damp conditions.

The experience allowed our program to compete in eight very competitive games prior to the beginning of the season. This type of trip will be a foundation for all future teams as this program continues to grow in both quality of schedule and baseball player.

The experience of this trip that each one of the players, parents and coaches has enjoyed will be forever remembered for the charter bus rides, plane ride, beautiful baseball fields, competitive games, Golden Coral, Digital Park and, last but not least, The Best Western Suites.

The players on the team conducted themselves in a professional manner the entire trip and should be commended for the way they carried themselves, as well as the passion with which they played and competed during the trip.

Special thanks go to our team chaperons who kept our team feed and uniforms clean throughout the trip Jim Gee, Terry Forte, Scott Edelstein and Bryan Romano, and all the parents who followed the team down to sunny Florida to support their team. It truly was impressive how many fans traveled to support the ballclub, and it's always a good thing for a player to know that he has the support of friends and family when making the kind of commitment the Vineland baseball team requires year round.

And how about those super Florida tee shirts? Thanks goes to Jim Gee.

From assistant coach Dave O'Sullivan: "I thought the trip to Florida was outstanding. If you're a coach, or even a fan of baseball, this was baseball the way it ought to be. The complex in Fort Pierce was incredible, and nonstop baseball every day against competitive teams was great. There was a college or minor-league atmosphere to the whole week and I know the guys on the team really enjoyed themselves. It was a great effort by a lot of people to make the trip a success, and I think it was a landmark event for the program and something I hope continues in the future."

Spring training 2011 recap



"I want to be remembered as the guy who gave his all whenever he was on the field."

Walter Payton



A NEW EXPERIENCE:

The Fighting Clan didn't know what to expect on their trip to Fort Pierce, Fla. The only thing the players knew was that they would be playing eight games in four days. In most of the games the players didn't even know what state their opponent was from. But that didn't stop Vineland from playing some quality baseball. The Fighting Clan ripped off two straight wins to start the tournament and finished up with a 6-2 record. And with so many games in just a four-day span, the coaching staff got to see plenty

of players in different positions, and 12 of the 20 players who made the trip got a chance to show what they could do on the mound. The offense was impressive all week, as Vineland scored 70 runs in the eight games and batted .342 as a team with 77 hits and a .479 on-base percentage. The team also showed some competitive fire on day two of the trip. Just three outs from the 10-run mercy rule and facing a 12-2 deficit to the Taft School (Conn.), Vineland staged an incredible rally and ended up winning the game 13-12.

Who was hot

A DAY FOR THE AGES:

Sophomore Mark Rowan must have eaten his Wheaties on the first day of baseball in Florida. Rowan got off to a torrid start, going 5-for-6 in the first two games with two doubles, three RBIs and a run scored. For the week, Rowan finished up 8-for-21 with a .476 slugging percentage and a .458 on-base percentage.

ROMANO, SCHWEGEL BATTLE IT OUT:

When it came to the top hitter during the Florida trip, seniors Bobby Romano and Andrew Schwegel duked it out the whole week. They finished up tied in average at .409, each with nine hits in 22 at-bats. Romano edged Schwegel in runs, 11-8, but Schwegel topped the center fielder in doubles, 3-2. The pair combined to drive in seven runs and six of their combined 18 hits went for extra bases.

CARTER A DUAL THREAT

Eli Carter got it done both on the mound and at the plate in Florida. As a hitter, the junior batted .412 (7-for-17) with seven runs, seven RBIs and a .529 slugging percentage. The burly right-hander also was brilliant on the mound in the Fighting Clan's final game of the trip, shutting down a very good Lyndhurst (NJ) squad in a 4-0 victory. He worked out of several jams and got some key run support from Rowan, Schwegel and Romano, and some outstanding defensive help from second baseman Vaughn Watson.

LITTLE LOPEZ COMES UP BIG

Junior Chris Lopez might weigh about the same as your average super model, and he might not make the height requirement to ride some of the rides at Great Adventure, but the little guy showed some grit, toughness and ability in Florida. Lopez batted a team-best .500 (8-for-16) and added four runs, two doubles and four RBIs. He also shut the door on Lyndhurst in the final game as a relief pitcher, earning the save.

Q & A: senior Andrew Schwegel

Question: You were primarily a designated hitter last year, and this year you're getting the chance to play more at first base. How has that transition gone?

Answer: The transition has been good. I have always viewed myself as a good defensive player, but never got the chance to show it last year. So it feels good to be able to play the field now.

Q: What's the most difficult thing about playing first base that the average fan might not know?

A: The sun plays a big part in most games, but most fans know that. I'd have to say that first base might be one of the hardest positions because we are expected to make up for the other infielders' throwing mistakes.

Q: When the team traveled to Florida in March, it was your first time on an airplane. What was that experience like?

A: I was a little nervous at first, but once I got on the plane it ended up being a blast.

Q: What did you like most about the trip to Florida?

A: Playing in that type of weather, and getting to bond more with my teammates.

Q: This is your second year playing under a new coaching staff. What do you think the future holds for Vineland baseball?

A: I think that this team is going to be very good in the next couple of years.

Q: You wear number 27. Any meaning behind that number?

A: No, not really. It's just a number.

Q: When you look back on your high school baseball career 20 years from now, what do you think you will remember most?

A: Hitting the grand slam to put us up against Buena last year, even though we lost.

Q: Who is the coolest player at Vineland High and why?

A: Well me of course, and because I'm just that good.

Q: You have the chance to go on a dream date. Who would you chose and where would you go?

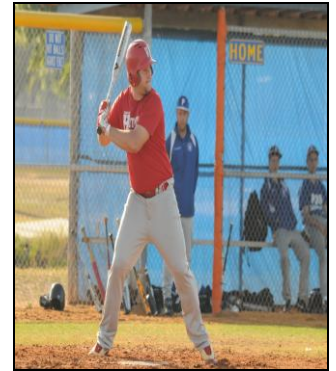
A: Well, first of all, I thought this was supposed to be about baseball? But to answer the question, I would choose to go with my girlfriend and I would most likely go to dinner and then a Phillies game.

Q: What is the best song to listen to in order to get psyched for a game?

A: I don't really listen to music before a game.

Q: If you could go to one major sporting event, what would it be and why?

A: The World Series, because my favorite team will be in it this year and I want to see them kick some butt. By the way, my favorite team is the Phillies.

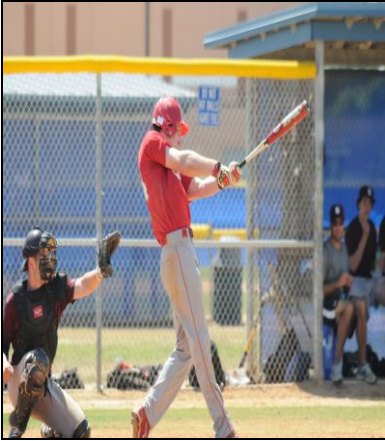


"If you don't invest very much, then defeat doesn't hurt very much and winning isn't very exciting."

-Dick Vermeil

"There are only two options regarding commitment: you're either in or you're out. There's no such thing as life in-between."

-Pat Reilly



Game By Game Recap

GAME 1: VINELAND 9, DEERFIELD ACADEMY (CT) 5

Vineland got off to a hot start in the opening game of the week, beating a pretty good Deerfield squad. Mark Rowan was the hitting star, going 4-for-4 with two doubles and a pair of RBIs. Vaughn Watson, Bobby Romano and Eli Carter each scored two runs as part of a 9-hit attack.

GAME 2: VINELAND 15, ST. LUKE'S ACADEMY (CT) 4

The Fighting Clan were down early, but exploded in the middle innings, led by Josh Stuart, who went 2-for-2 with a run scored and five RBIs. Carter had two hits, including a triple, and scored three runs.

GAME 3: IONA PREP (NY) 2, VINELAND 1

Iona was a sharp defensive team with good pitching that cooled off the Clan's hot bats. Andrew Schwegel had two of Vineland's six hits and Jim Hague had an RBI double.

GAME 4: VINELAND 13, TAFT SCHOOL (CT) 12

This game was ugly for five innings, as the Taft school roughed up the Clan, building a 12-2 lead. Vineland was just three outs from losing via the mercy rule when it mounted an improbably comeback as Taft's pitching slowly fell apart. Watson had a hit, two runs and two RBIs and Romano was 2-for-4 with two runs and an RBI. Chris Lopez had a double and two RBIs and Carlos Lebron was 2-for-2 with an RBI.

GAME 5: LENAPE VALLEY 13, VINELAND 3

Not much went right for the Clan in this game, as Lenape Valley jumped all over the scoreboard early and often. Vineland had just three hits, by Tommy Rodriguez, Lopez and Rickey Hinds.

GAME 6: VINELAND 12, WORCESTER (MASS) 7

The offense bounced back from the loss to Lenape Valley, as Romano went 4-for-4 three runs and an RBI to lead a 16-hit attack. Jesse Edelstein was 2-for-2 with a pair of RBIs and Johnny Malatesta and Lebron also had two hits each.

GAME 7: VINELAND 13, PRINCETON DAY 6

This game was never really close as the Clan pounded the Panthers. Carter led the offense with three hits and two RBIs and Watson was 2-for-3 with three runs and an RBI.

GAME 8: VINELAND 4, LYNDHURST (NJ) 0

Lyndhurst was 22-9 last season and graduated just one starter, but Vineland was psyched up from the start to close out the trip with a win. Carter was brilliant on the mound, tossing six scoreless innings before Lopez shut the door. Romano scored a pair of runs and Schwegel had two hits and an RBI.

*"I was never
afraid of failure,
for I would
sooner fail than
not be among the
best."*

-John Keats

Outtakes

Head coach John Malatesta likely enjoyed every facet of the trip to Florida except for one: The late-night snoring of his roommate at the Fort Pierce Best Western, assistant coach Dave O'Sullivan. Rumor has it that on several occasions, Malatesta was forced to throw his extra pillow at O'Sullivan in an effort to quiet the Irishman down!

During one game, second baseman Vaughn Watson made an unbelievable play, ranging deep into the hole and turning to fire to second base to get the lead runner. Only problem? Shortstop Eli Carter wasn't at second base. When coach Malatesta asked Carter why he wasn't covering the bag, Carter said, "I didn't think (Watson) could make that play. That was a great play, wasn't it?"

The guys were apparently thrilled to eat dinner one night at the Golden Corral restaurant. Carter ate so much that in the van on the way back to the hotel he said, "I'm so full I can't even text!"

A father's perspective on the trip

Jose Velez, father of pitcher Brandon Velez: My perspective on the Florida trip was that it was a complete success for the program. As a father, it was very rewarding to see how all the hard work from the players, coaches and parents came together and everything went off wonderfully. It makes me feel very proud of my son to see how hard he has and is continuing to work to achieve making the varsity club. Every time he walks on the field, he is representing his school, his coaches and his family. I feel that coach John Malatesta and his coaching staff handle their business with the utmost integrity and professionalism and have managed to re-establish respect and integrity to the VHS baseball program. As a fan, watching the team develop and play in Florida was a great elation and felt very good about the fact that we were the first of many VHS fans in Florida for many years to come.

Terry Forte, father of infielder Mike Forte: Spring Training at Ft. Pierce was a great experience for my son and I. I was pleasantly surprised to be asked to help chaperone during this trip. So when the opportunity came to do so, I jumped on it. I am very happy the coaching staff decided to take the team to Florida, because it provided an opportunity for the team to get some good games in early versus quality opponents. This was very important because the nature of the weather here in New Jersey can be brutal for young teams trying to get a great start early in the season. The trip also provided a team-bonding situation that only an experience like this can present.

The weather was perfect and the teams that we played were great. I felt as though our players had a chance to gel and really work on things that make good teams into great teams. The coaches get the benefit of seeing what players can do in game situations, which would not be possible in a gym during cold weather. They also see how each player interacts with one another outside the lines. Florida provided me with a wonderful experience watching my son play ball with the varsity team. He was very excited to be included in this trip, and for him, being out there was everything. Watching your son play ball is like a roller-coaster. There will be highs and lows during the ride. It doesn't matter, though, I'll choose the roller-coaster every time. No matter what, he was better for it. Finally, I hope that this trip becomes a tradition here at Vineland and that through these types of experiences and opportunities Vineland baseball becomes the type of program that is envied for years to come.



"Our truest life is when we are in dreams awake."

-Henry David Thoreau



5Q: Five questions for Brandon Velez

1. What did you think of the trip to Fort Pierce, Florida?

I thought that the trip to Florida was great. It was a great experience for all of us.

2. You had a rough outing in Florida, but coach Malatesta went right back to you the next game. How important is that for a coach to show confidence in his players?

It is really important for a coach to have confidence in his players. After my rough outing I couldn't wait to go back on the mound. It was great that coach Mal gave me that opportunity in the second game of our double header. It gave me the chance to put the first game behind me.

3. If you were making your Major League debut, what stadium would you want it to be in?

If I was making my Major League debut I would like to play in Fenway Park.

4. Who's got more swag? Eva Longoria or Evan Longoria?

More swag...Evan Longoria

5. Where do you think would be the coolest place to go to college if you could pick any school?

If I could go to college anywhere I would choose the University of Texas.



"The future is not set. There is no fate but what we make for ourselves."

-Irish proverb

5Q: Five questions for Jacob Brooks

1. What's it like being the smallest guy on the field most of the time?

I'm not the tallest on the field, but I try to be the most verbal.

2. Who was the worst roommate you had on the Florida trip and why?

Brandon I'm sorry, but your bag smelled so bad!

3. If you could be a NASCAR driver, what company would you want sponsoring your car?

Frito Lay

4. If you were running for student council president, what would your slogan be?

Won't War Breed Hatred?

5. You've been out walking in the desert for 3 days with no food. What's your first meal going to be when you are rescued?

Pizza from Pizza Queen. They deliver now.

*“How a man
plays a game
shows something
of his character.
Howe he loses
shows all of it.”*

-Anonymous

On deck:

TUESDAY, APRIL 12 VS HAMMONTON, 4 PM

The Fighting Clan host the Blue Devils and will be looking for some payback. Last year Hammonton swept the season series.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13 AT ATLANTIC CITY, 4 PM

Vineland will be looking for a repeat of last year, when the Fighting Clan beat the Vikings on their home turf.

FRIDAY, APRIL 15 AT MILLVILLE, 4 PM

The first showdown of the year with the powerful Thunderbolts.

Slow start followed by big win

Holy Spirit 8, Vineland 6: Upon returning from Florida, the Fighting Clan were faced with a brutal schedule to start the 2011 campaign. Up first was powerful Holy Spirit in the Al Hedelt Tournament. Don Money pitched well and Vineland had the game tied at 3-3 heading into the fifth before the Spartans rallied for five runs to take an 8-3 lead. Vineland battled back, however, scoring three times in the seventh to cut the deficit to 8-6 and had the tying run at second base before Holy Spirit wiggled out of the jam to preserve the 8-6 win. Bobby Romano was 2-for-4 with a double, two RBIs and a run scored to lead the offense and Andrew Schwegel had a clutch 2-run double.

St. Augustine 8, Vineland 2: The Clan hung with the mighty Hermits through five innings behind a strong pitching effort from Eli Carter, but St. Augustine rallied for five runs over the final two innings to put the game out of reach.

Ocean City 2, Vineland 0: The bats fell silent as the Red Raiders used strong pitching a defense to squeak out a win.

Vineland 5, Williamstown 4: The Clan (1-3) picked up their first win of the season on Sunday in the Hedelt tournament, as Carter drove home Mike Forte with the game-winner on a sacrifice fly with the bases loaded in the bottom of the seventh. Jacob Brooks earned the win in relief of Brandon Velez, and the duo combined to allow just six hits overall.



*“A smooth sea
never made a
skillful
mariner.”*

-Anonymous