

Danny Payne reflects on successful year

By Michael Clarke
Senior Staff Writer

Whether he is playing football or baseball, Danny Payne has found a way to stand out on and off the field. If asked about it, he credits those around him first for his success.

Payne was recruited heavily going into his senior year at Sequoyah High School in Woodstock, Georgia and not just for baseball. Payne was also a star running back.

He was being recruited by West Virginia, Maryland and Louisville for football only. Tennessee, Florida, and Georgia Southern were recruiting him to play both football and baseball.

"After talking to my family, we decided that playing two sports was a lot to take on," Payne said. "I wanted to play professional baseball, not professional football. I love football and if baseball doesn't work, I'd love to try my hand at it again. I miss the sport knowing that I could've played somewhere, but I wouldn't give this up."

After signing with Tech, Payne found out from Sequoyah baseball coach, Dave Audia, that he was their first ballplayer to play major D-1 baseball.

"It feels good knowing that I'm the first," Payne said. "I know a lot of people are rooting for me and hoping I do well."

Adjusting to college life involves a lot of trial and error for most students, but for an athlete the errors can be a lot more costly at a school like Tech.

"It's something that you learn as you go," Payne said. "You can't really prepare before you get here. Especially at Tech with all the pres-



By Ariel Bravy / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Freshman Danny Payne played a large part in Tech's successful season; Payne started in center field and hit lead off.

sure of the academic side and playing baseball, you have to learn to balance everything. It's tough at first, but once you find a routine that works for you, it makes it a lot easier."

Starting with the Florida State series, Payne's batting average began to take a dive. Payne was one of the team leaders with a .348 batting average, but saw his batting average fall drastically when he fell into a 10-game slump.

"School took its toll with finals being there and trying to wrap up the school year," Payne said. "The academic side definitely takes its toll on you because you are so stressed and focused on making the grades that it shows on the baseball field as well."

Payne found older members of the team to be supportive and

acknowledges their help.

"Jeremy [Slayden] and Cameron [Lane] have both helped me a great deal," Payne said. "Coming in, everyone is always worried about freshman hazing and there was none of that. They both took me under their wing and showed me the ropes."

Slayden was a major influence on baseball and college life for Payne.

"Jeremy has talked to me and helped me about the draft aspect," Payne said. "He had the great freshman year and then put so much pressure on himself the sophomore year that it had a negative effect on him. He was able to clue me in on what helped him get through everything and try to avoid the same problems."

Payne credits Cameron Lane as being the guy that he could count

on.

"Cam has been one of my best friends on the team," Payne said. "If I needed anything, I would call him. He would pick me up and take me to practice everyday. He was someone that I looked up to coming in as a senior."

Payne's parents were also a big influence on his life.

"My parents [are a big influence] no doubt," Payne said. "Obviously, I'm going to be closer to my dad than my mom just because of the athletics aspect. He's coached me from the time I was five until I was fifteen, and he's still coaching me from the stands. He's been the biggest influence on me athletically and outside athletics."

Like a lot of his current and future teammates, Payne played summer ball for the East Cobb Yankees. So many players from the team come to Tech that Brad Rulon says they are nicknamed the Junior Jackets.

"I think they prepared me for the college game very well," Payne said. "We always played the best of the best. Half of the players on this team played for East Cobb. I was a lot more comfortable coming here than I would've been at another school where I didn't know so many players."

Athletes often have a childhood dream of seeing themselves on ESPN, and this came true for Payne during the NCAA postseason run.

"There is nothing I can compare it to," Payne said. "All of the exposure and playing on a stage like this is amazing. Growing up I watched the entire road to Omaha. Ever since I was little I thought that it would be cool to be on that and ESPN."

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Blake Wood and Jeff Kindel. Ladd is playing for the Cotuit Kettleers. Turner and Lee Hyde are playing for the Brewster Whitecaps and the Orleans Cardinals, respectively.

Brad Feltes, Michael Fischer and John Michael Vidic are all playing in other summer leagues up and down the east coast.

"Last year, I went up there and had a really good summer," Turner said. "I'm not in as big a rush to throw as I was last year. I'm really excited to get back."

A few of the Jackets have been able to find themselves at or near the top of a few statistical categories so far this summer.

Robbins is currently tied for the homerun lead in the league with three. He holds the lead with a .719 slugging percentage. Seven of his nine hits have been for extra bases.

"It was a really good experience playing with a bunch of really good baseball players," Robbins said.

Rulon's 1.00 ERA puts him in the top 10 in pitching at the Cape so far. In four appearances, he has shutdown opposing bats averaging a strikeout an inning and only giving up seven hits.

"It'll be my first time [pitching to wood bats]," Rulon said. "A lot of the guys that play East Cobb have played with wood bats, but I've never pitched against it."

After arriving to the league late, Jeff Kindel has started off swinging the bat very well. In his first three games, he is averaging .500.

Wood and Gustafson combined to give up two runs on three hits in a win over the Orleans Cardinals on Saturday.

Matt Wieters and Wes Hodges have yet to report to their prospective teams as they are in the process of trying out for the USA National Team. The process ended yesterday and the official 20 man roster will be announced today.

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A PAYNE FOR OTHER TEAMS

Freshman Danny Payne made a strong impact, leading off and playing center field for the highly-ranked Jackets. Page 15

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sports shorts

Hall signs new five-year contract

Tech Baseball Head Coach Danny Hall has agreed to and signed a new five-year contract. The new deal will keep Hall with the Jackets through 2010.

Under the new contract, Hall will make \$200,000 in base salary. In comparison, his base salary under the old contract was \$140,000.

The possibility of total compensation is over \$400,000. This factors in television, equipment and camps.

Hall has helped more than 50 of his players sign professional contracts. Tyler Greene and five other players from this year's team were drafted.

Hewitt hires new assistant coach

Basketball Head Coach Paul Hewitt added Tennessee-Chattanooga assistant Charlton Young to his staff.

Young replaces Cliff Warren, who left to fill the vacant head coaching position at Jacksonville.

Young spent seven years at Auburn during two stints with the Tigers. The Tigers' most successful record, 22-12, was the 2002-03 season. Auburn advanced to the Sweet 16 in the NCAA Tournament.

Before becoming a coach he was a guard at Georgia Southern. Young holds GSU basketball records for career assists and three-pointers.

Mich. State to host Tech in Challenge

Tech will be on the road again during the seventh annual ACC/Big Ten Challenge this year.

The Jackets will be hosted by Michigan State on November 30. The last time the two teams met, Tech defeated the Spartans 81-80 in overtime of the 1990 Sweet 16.

The Jackets are 3-3 in the previous Challenges, but are 1-2 on the road.

Bodipo-Memba aids national team

Georgia Tech volleyball assistant coach Ben Bodipo-Memba helped lead the United States Women's National Team to a fourth-place finish at the Pan American Cup as an assistant coach.

Bodipo-Memba assisted in all aspects of daily training and opponent scouting in Colorado Springs, Colo. The team qualified for the 2006 World Grand Prix with their finish at the Pan American Games in the Dominican Republic.

Bodipo-Memba has made appearances in the NCAA Tournament in each of his four seasons as a Tech assistant coach.

Nuggets draft Jack in first round

By Michael Clarke
Senior Staff Writer

Jarrett Jack was taken by the Denver Nuggets with the 22nd overall pick in the NBA Draft. Jack was a Nugget for only an hour before he was traded to the Portland Trailblazers. Jack was the only Tech player selected in this year's draft.

"I've loved my three years at Georgia Tech," Jack said. "I appreciate everything the people here, the coaches and the fans, have done for me. And I will fulfill my academic requirements."

Jack declared for the NBA draft at the last minute on May 5 and waited until the last minute before electing not to take his name out of the draft last Tuesday.

"With the success that I've had over the last three

years, it's tough to walk away. My dream has always been to play in the NBA and I feel that I'm ready," Jack said.

He is just the sixth Tech player to make an early entry into the NBA draft and the second in three years.

"I support Jarrett in his decision," Head Coach Paul Hewitt said. "He has spoken to many of the decision-makers in the NBA and goes into this with his eyes wide open. I've been impressed with how mature he has been throughout the process and expect him to be very successful in the NBA."

While at Tech, Jack became just the sixth player in Tech history to

score more than 1,000 points and have more than 500 assists. Jack started in 100 of his 101 games at Tech. The only game that he didn't start was March 5, 2005 against Clemson.

Since he has been at Tech the Jackets hold a 64-37 record, including a national runner-up finish in 2004.

Jack ends his career ranked 26th in career points at Tech with 1,265 and fifth in assists with 543.

Jack was the fourth point guard taken from Tech in the first round of the NBA draft and the fourteenth player overall.

The last Tech player drafted in the first round was Jack's freshman roommate, Chris Bosh, who was selected sixth overall in 2003.

Stephon Marbury (1996), Travis Best (1995) and Kenny Anderson (1991) were the other Tech point guards selected in the first round. Mark Price was selected as the first pick in the second round in the 1986 draft.

Despite not being drafted, the road to a professional career is still open for several Jackets. Luke Schenscher and Will Bynum generated the most buzz around them heading into the draft, but were not picked. B.J. Elder looked to be solidly in the second round at season's end, but fell off the radar as he was healing his ankle.

"My dream has always been to play in the NBA and I feel that I am ready."

Jarrett Jack
Former point guard



By Stephen Marek / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Jarrett Jack was the 22nd overall pick in the NBA draft. Jack is the fourth point guard taken in the first round of the draft from Tech.

"I've heard a lot of teams like Luke including San Antonio. Will did a great job at the pre-draft camp and B.J. did a good job with his individual workouts. We're all in this together," Jack said.

These players will all be waiting to sign free agent contracts. Anthony McHenry will most likely be playing professional ball overseas next season and could be followed by a few other Jackets.

With Jack leaving, senior Theodis

Tarver and junior Mario West will be the only upperclassmen on Tech's team next year with Tarver being the only player on next year's roster to have started a game for Tech.

Tech will also be returning four sophomores and welcoming three freshmen to the team. Freshmen Lewis Clinch and Alade Aminu were both ranked in the top 10 nationally. The team lost recruit Austin Jackson to the professional baseball draft earlier this month.

Baseball sends twelve to summer leagues

By Michael Clarke
Senior Sports Writer

With the end of the college baseball season comes the start of the summer leagues for the players. Several players have been selected to play at various leagues across the nation, including the prestigious Cape Cod League.

Summer baseball is a different feel for the pitchers as well as the position players. Instead of hitting with the aluminum bats, players get a feel for playing with and against wooden bats.

The leagues also give scouts a better read as to where players are and how well they will fare on the next level.

"I heard a lot of good things about the Cape," Brad Rulon said. "I was very happy when I found out that I was going to be going. It's the premiere college league in the summer, so it's a great chance to play in front of scouts and be working on things for next season."

"It's a really big difference," Whit Robbins said. "First of all, the strike zone up there is huge. It's a pitcher's league and a challenge for us to get up there and play with wooden bats."

The Cape Cod League gives players an opportunity to work on their fundamentals and mechanics. Players like Rulon will be using the opportunity to improve their skills.

"I'm going to try and drop my arm angle down some and make my change-up better," Rulon said.

In addition to playing with the wood bats, another challenge for the players will be seeing their teammates from opposing dugouts.

"It'll feel weird pitching against my teammates," Tim Ladd said. "Even if I know how to pitch against [my teammates], it'll be really hard to pitch against them."

"We intra-squad, but it'll be fun to [play against each other] in an important game," Rulon said.

"It'll be neat pitching to some of the hitters," Ryan Turner said. "In summer ball, you always face guys you know, but I haven't faced any guys on our team yet."

Danny Payne and Robbins are playing for the Wareham Gatemen this summer. The Yarmouth-Dennis Red Sox have the most Jackets in the Cape with Rulon, Tim Gustafson,



By Ariel Bravy / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Whit Robbins is playing for the Wareham Gatemen in the Cape Cod League this summer. He is tied for the league home-run lead.

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