

Ohio Elite 13u Baseball

submitted by Marc Harris

"The Ohio Elite baseball team is based upon a shared philosophy amongst players, coaches, and parents. The Ohio Elite consists of players from all over the state of Ohio with the purpose of competing on a national stage, while developing skills for high school and college play. More importantly we will guide the boys in their maturity and life long learning through the game of baseball."

This is the motto that was created when a team of players, from small towns scattered across central Ohio, joined the Ohio Elite family as 11 year olds in 2009-2010. They were also known as the Mid-Ohio Blaze 11U. Coach Tim Messer from the Ohio Elite contacted Mid-Ohio Blaze coaches Marc Harris and Kirk Manns about becoming the flagship 11U team for the Ohio Elite Organization. All the coaches agreed and the process began. The first thing they did was create a mission statement that is listed above. From there the team has started rewriting history in Ohio travel baseball.

It is not often that a group of boys from small farm towns and out of the way suburbs get together to play a game and grow friendships that will last their lifetimes. It is not often that a group of parents buy into the coaching message that it is about the "team" and their boys will do whatever they can to help that team succeed. It is not often that a team doesn't lose players and doesn't hold tryouts to fill missing spots. It is not often that a team sweeps through the state of Ohio, defeating all comers with a heavy dose of respect and maturity. When we say "not often" it means that it happens rarely. This Ohio Elite team has blazed a trail to the tune of a 200-41 record over four years. This kind of success is rarely seen at any level in Ohio. Over the last two years these boys are 114-13 and have won fifteen tournaments including: Cincinnati Flames Classic 12U, one of the top tournaments in the Mid West, a Cal Ripken Experience 12U championship in Myrtle Beach, two open class/premier Ohio State championships, a Nations Great Lakes World Series 12U championship, and a Triple Crown National Championship

11U in Myrtle Beach, which included three TBS top 25 teams and eight TBS national ranked teams, some of which were the Southern Jaguars, Dbat Mustangs, Hanover Sports, Virginia Wolfpack, and the Dallas Patriots.

Although the statistics show impressive performance, that is not what makes this team special. The impressive aspect of this team is their chemistry and maturity. These attributes make the team successful, which allows them to be ranked among some of the greatest teams in Ohio. They are never one



From left: Roger McIntyre, Tim Messer, Marc Harris, Chuck Melick, Kirk Manns;
Seated: Honorary Coach/Bat Boy/
Inspiration: Gage Harris



From Left to Right: Troy Messer, Andy Blough, Kenton Mickley, Trent McIntyre, Zane Harris, Noah Ferguson, Bryant Shellenbarger, Kirk Manns, Alec Keen, and Brendan Mapes. Not shown: Dominic Drouhard

to jump for joy when they win a state title, or a World Series. They just high five each other, congratulate each other, and then the other team. Then they focus on the next game. They never really settle on what just happened, but how they are going to make their goals happen in the future. The coaches think this work ethic stems from the player's work in the classroom. Every player on the team is an honor roll student, which says a lot since most of them are in advanced placement classes in their middle school or junior high. That type of work ethic is a credit to the parents. Six parents are educators/teachers which really sets a great framework for success. The other four sets of parents are professionals in their fields. All parents on the team are uniquely successful and they know what it takes to teach their kids how to succeed in life. It is a rare collection of families willing to sacrifice for their children, both socially and economically. That is the life blood of the Ohio Elite: The families, they make it all work.

These players and their families come from seven different school districts and only two of them go to the same school. Nine of the players are quarterbacks on their respected teams in football. They play junior high and AAU basketball together in the winter and spring. Several are wrestlers while others participate in track. The boys are a unique collection of top athletes from Ohio. They certainly are some of the best baseball players in the state of Ohio and the Midwest. The Ohio Elite have proven themselves on the field by playing the best teams they can find. But the philosophy of the team is to prepare these boys for the future. Some of them will play baseball in college, while some of them will be successful in other sports or professions. One of the Elite's coaches always says, "These boys need to be put in uncomfortable positions in order to learn how to compete and get better. You can't do that playing a weak schedule." Each year the team has lived by that statement and this year the Ohio Elite plans on playing some of the top tournaments in the country. They will play in the Columbus USSSA Super NIT, Indiana Elite Invitational, Dublin Memorial, Cincinnati Flames Classic, Michigan Super NIT, Michigan Major Elite, Nation's Ohio State Championships Premier Division, Battle of the South, TN, and The Triple Crown National Championships in Myrtle Beach.

The coaches and players would like to thank the parents for all the support the parents give them throughout the year. They would also like to thank the Ohio Elite Organization, its founders Kelley Ratcliff and Chris Valentine, for their unwavering support and guidance for the future of this 13U team. The Ohio Elite Organization is without a doubt the top organization in the state of Ohio and one of the best in the United States. The Coaches would like to thank the players for their dedication, effort, and all the intangibles that make them all great young men. All the boys are at least three-sport athletes and are encouraged to play as many sports as they can, but when they return to the diamond in early March, among the snow and bitter cold; they will really heat things up in the Mid West. Let's meet the Ohio Elite:

Alec Keen #47: Alec is the Ohio Elite's lead off hitter and second baseman. Alec boasts an incredible glove and range for a middle



infielder to go along with his knowledge of the game. It is not uncommon to see #47 laying out in a dive and snag a ground ball, only to flip the ball to initiate a double play, all from his

belly. As the lead off hitter Alec is in charge of getting on base and using his fantastic speed to cause havoc to the opposing defense. Leading the team in walks and possessing one of the best on base percentages, Alec also swings a powerful bat by hitting eight home runs from his lead off spot. Alec was also one of the Elite's pitchers

often starting games in tournaments because of his deceptive velocity and great off speed pitches. Alec is a three-sport star, an Honor Roll student and plans to attend college.

Avg: .391; HRs: 8; Runs: 92; Slg: .615; BB: 40

Trent McIntyre #14: Trent is one of the top all around players in the Mid West. He is a true five-tool player and the Elite's leading hitter. Trent has played both his

age group and played up two age groups for most of his career. His baseball intellect is second to none and is often demonstrated on the base paths where he terrorizes defenses with his speed. Trent is half of the best catching duo in the state of Ohio, but that is not what makes him special. He can play any position on the field at the highest level and he does it with enthusiasm and a smile. On the mound he throws in the mid 70s and when not behind the plate he is roaming the outfield with fellow speedsters, Blough, Ferguson, and Shellenbarger. Trent is a three sport star, an Honor Roll student, and plans on attending college.



Avg: .566; HR: 31; RBI: 97; Obp: .634; Slg: 1276

Zane Harris #9: Being the youngest player on the team doesn't mean Zane has to be the smallest. At 6 feet tall, 200 lbs, Zane is a large left handed power hitter. #9 hit a home run every thirteen at bats, many of which were 300 feet. He possesses home run power to all fields and was second on the Elite with 81 RBI. Zane was 7-1 on the

mound with a 2.43 era as a right handed pitcher. He threw three different pitches including a great breaking pitch to keep opposing hitters off balance. He plays third and first



base in the field. Zane is a 3-sport star, an Honor Roll student and plans to attend college.

Avg: .452; HR: 12; RBI: 81; Slg: .771; Wins: 7-1

Noah Ferguson #7: Noah filled the role of ace pitcher for the Elite.

He went 15-5 for his team most often matched up against the opponent's best pitcher. While throwing in the mid 70s, Noah possesses great control which led to a high strike out ratio while only walking two batters every six innings. When not on the mound, Noah is roaming the outfield making assists throwing out runners. He is also one of the top power hitters on the team hitting fifteen homeruns many of which were over 300 feet in distance. Noah is also a 3-sport star, Honor Roll student, and plans on attending college.



Avg: .405; HR: 15; Slg: .837; ERA: 2.30; Wins: 15-5

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Troy Messer #10: Troy is one of the players on the Ohio Elite that can play almost any position. Logging time in the infield and outfield made him invaluable when rotating players on the mound. Troy routinely showed his willingness to sacrifice his at bat to move runners. He was the Elite's best bunter and regularly executed this task in very high pressure situations which directly resulted in a win. But, his ability to bunt didn't fool some teams as they found out the hard way as he hit three home runs. Troy also excelled on the mound with a strike to ball ratio of 2.5, mixing in a nasty sinker and great off speed pitches. Troy is a 3-sport star, Honor Roll student and plans on attending college.



Kenton Mickley #11: The Ohio Elite's short stop is there for a reason. Kenton has unbelievable range, elite level glove work, superior gamesmanship and a rocket arm. He led the team in singles, but



was in the top four players in almost all offensive categories. Kenton has blazing speed and this made dealing with him on the base paths a daunting task. One of the top base runners in the state, his knowledge of the game and reading the opposition's weaknesses were invaluable for the Elite. Kenton was also one of the Elite's top pitchers. He led the team with a 1.76 ERA while facing many of the top pitchers from the opposition. This was Kenton's first full year of pitching and he didn't disappoint, as he was the winning pitcher in three tournament championship games. Kenton is a 3-sport star, Honor Roll student, and plans on attending college.

Avg: .450; Slg: .630; ERA: .176; Wins: 9-0

Kirk Manns #22: Kirk Manns was second on the team with wins as a pitcher. He had a record of 11-1 as a starter and was used as a reliever in a lot of tough situations during the season. Kirk is a left handed pitcher and can shut down a team's running game with several different pick off moves while varying time to the plate. Kirk has a devastating change up to go along with a nasty 2-seam sinker, which he uses to get out right handed hitters. Kirk also plays first base and outfield. Kirk was one of the team leaders in walks and had an obp of .500. One of the Elite's three left handed power hitters, Kirk is also leader on and off the field for the Elite. He is a 3-sport star, an Honor Roll student and plans on



attending college.

Avg: .389; BB: 35; Obp: .500; Wins: 11-1; ERA: 3.06

Brendan Mapes #3: Brendan is the field general of the Ohio Elite's defense. He is the other half of the best catching duo in Ohio, and is the vocal leader of the players. As the Elite's primary catcher, Brendan threw out almost 40 base stealers this season at second base and many runners at third. He has superior defensive catching skills and is very intellectual and tactful when handling his pitching staff. Brendan is an extension of the coaches on the field, and is nicknamed "Coach Mapes" by his friends. #3 is a five tool player and can play any position on the field with the best. Brendan is also a force at the plate. He only struck out only six times in over 200 plate appearances and was by far the leader in this category. He brings unbelievable work ethic and enthusiasm to his team and is rewarded by his team's success. Brendan is a 3-sport star and is an Honor Roll student. He plans on attending college.



Avg: .389; AB/SO ratio: 200/6; Runners thrown out stealing: 49; RBI: 61

Bryant Shellenbarger #24: Bryant is the third of the left handed power hitters. He has the uncanny ability to hit just about any pitch near the plate because of his incredible hand/eye coordination. Bryant led the team in triples, was second in hits, avg, and doubles, and was third in HR.

Batting .500 for the season Bryant routinely broke close games wide open with his majestic HR traveling 300 feet or more. Combine his speed with the power and he was truly a weapon for the Ohio Elite. Bryant "cruised" the outfield and led the team in assists and once threw out a runner at first base from mid-left field, a testament to his tremendous arm. He also used his strong arm on the mound as he was 8-0 on the mound and was also used in relief extensively. He mixed in three pitches including a top level breaking pitch to dominate on the mound with a 2.92 era. Bryant is an Honor Roll student and is planning on attending college.



Avg: .500; Slg: .934; HR: 12; Wins: 8-0; ERA: 2.92

Andy Blough #2: Andy is another five tool player who can play any position at the highest level, but he loves to play center field. As the Elite's centerfielder Andy was in charge of the outfield and their shifts according to scouting reports. What makes Andy stand out is his intelligence, unbelievable speed, and his willingness to dive for any ball coming his way. Andy can single handedly shut down the power alleys with his route running and speed and then use his strong



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arm to throw people out at any base. At the plate Andy is another of the Elite's power hitters. Hitting HR 300 feet were nothing new for Andy, but his speed on the bases was devastating to the opposing team's defense. Andy had a .829 slugging percentage along with twelve HR and a .493 batting average. Andy is a 3-sport star, an Honor Roll student, and plans on going to college. Avg: .493; HR: 12; Slg: .829; Obp: .551; Runs: 71

Dominic Drouhard #5: Ohio Elite welcomes the newest member to join the team,

Dominic Drouhard, out of Dublin, Ohio. Dominic joins us as one of the strongest pitchers in the region. He has been deemed "the closer" as he has the ability to come in and shut teams down under pressure situations with his strong arm, off speed pitching, and a wicked knuckle ball. Dominic has also proven his endurance on the mound by pitching two complete games for wins and was able to assist his former team by pitching in the final game to win the USSSA AAA State Championship. When Dominic is not on the mound you may find him at third base or right field where his strong arm assists in throwing out runners. Dominic is also a 3-sport star, an honor roll student including being the recipient of the Page Academic Award,

and has plans to attend college.

Weston Melick: Batboy: Weston is the younger brother of the Elite's short stop Kenton. Weston is 8 years old and like all bat boys, loves to follow the older boys around emulating what they do and idolizing what they have done. Weston is an elite player in his own right and will be starting his travel ball career next season with some of the coaching staff doing double duty with a new 9U club.

Gage Harris: Batboy/honorary coach:

Gage is Zane's younger brother and is an inspiration for all the boys and parents on the Ohio Elite. He suffers from Duchene Muscular



Dystrophy and also has a rare heart defect called Truncous Arteriosis. He is 9 years old. Gage never misses a game, (unless there is a storm, he definitely does not like thunder storms!) and is in the dugout driving around giving encouragement and advice. He has eleven brothers on this team that take him everywhere whether on the field or off. Gage's favorite sport is baseball, and he is his brother's #1 fan. Gage is often seen driving the bases after every game for fun. The Ohio Elite is not complete without him.

