

# Former PHS Baseball Star Etherton A Big Hit in Chestnut Hill Debut

Danny Etherton was excited to get in on the ground floor with the Chestnut Hill College (Pa.) baseball team as it fielded the first varsity squad in school history.

But as the former Princeton High standout went through fall workouts, he wasn't sure how much he was going to contribute once the season started this spring.

"I didn't have a very good fall," said Etherton. "I wasn't feeling like I was in sync. We did a lot of running, we were doing sprints in the snow."

But once spring rolled around, Etherton hit the ground running when he got his chance to get on the field for the Division II Griffins.

The lanky 6'2 outfielder led the team in hitting (.403), hits (50), runs (22), total bases (64), and slugging percentage (.516) on his way to earning second-team Central Athletic Collegiate Conference honors and placing second in the league's Rookie of the Year balloting.

Etherton was as surprised as anyone with his success as a freshman. "I was just hoping to play, I pinch hit in one game and got a hit and then did the same thing the next game and then I was starting," recalled Etherton.

"For the first couple of weeks, I didn't know what was going on. By the fourth week, I realized I could have a pretty special season."

While the Griffins took their lumps as they went 7-34 in their debut campaign, Etherton thinks the freshman-laden squad learned some valuable lessons that could pay off down the road.

"We were close in a lot of games; we had a lot of 1-run losses," said Etherton.

"We were definitely competitive; a lot of those close losses came to teams with a lot of seniors. We didn't know what to expect at first,

some of the guys thought we would roll through the schedule. After a couple of weeks, we realized that wasn't going to happen. We tried to make every at-bat count. I hope to win a lot more games next year."

Etherton credits the Griffin coaching staff with helping him make his freshman year count.

"The coaches put me in a position to succeed, they used my talents well," said Etherton, who had 17 stolen bases and 21 RBIs.

"I'm a decent bunter and I had something like 15 bunt hits. I had a lot of stolen bases."

Chestnut Hill head coach Bob Spratt believed that Etherton had the athleticism to help his squad eventually.

"Our assistant coach Brian Burke saw Danny at a showcase and we liked his size and speed," said Spratt, who is starting the baseball program at the former all-women's school. "We saw

him as the fourth outfielder, thinking he would get plenty of action."

Etherton's rapid progress, though, took Spratt aback. "He got his opportunity and made the most of it," said Spratt.

"He took to our style of ball but we didn't expect him to be our main offensive threat. We used him at the one, three, and four spots in lineup. He ended up mostly at third and he set the tone for our offense."

While Spratt realizes that Etherton may not hit .400 every year, he believes the star has just scratched the surface of what he can contribute to the program.

"At our end of year meeting I told him he can't think that he is automatically going to move up to .500; this is college baseball," said Spratt.

"I want him to get a little stronger and hit more gaps. I also want him to improve his baserunning. He had 17 stolen bases but the best is



**HILLTOPPER:** Danny Etherton displays his level swing during his career with the Princeton High baseball team. This spring, Etherton emerged as a star for Chestnut Hill College (Pa.) in his freshman season. The 6'2 outfielder led the team in hitting (.403), hits (50), runs (22), total bases (64), and slugging percentage (.516) on his way to earning second-team Central Athletic Collegiate Conference honors and placing second in the league's Rookie of the Year balloting.

(Photo by Bill Allen/NJ SportAction)

yet to come. He is a force to be reckoned with."

Etherton, for his part, is looking to make himself into more of a physical force.

"I'm trying to do a strength and conditioning program," said Etherton, who will likely play American Legion ball this summer for Princeton Post 218.

"I want to be stronger; hit more doubles so I don't have to rely on others to move me to second."

Chestnut Hill will certainly be relying on Etherton to build on his strong debut campaign.

—Bill Alden