

Miranda Displayed Leadership, Spirit As PHS Baseball Endured Tough Spring

He had just doused his coach with a bucket of water and he was about to take a pie in the face.

At first glance, it would seem that Princeton High senior baseball star John Miranda was in the middle of celebrating a tournament victory.

In actuality, the hijinks came on a Senior Day last Thursday which saw PHS fall 6-0 to Hopewell Valley to end the season with a 1-22 record.

While Miranda would've wanted to see the Little Tigers pile up a lot more wins in his final campaign, he saw plenty of reason to celebrate last Thursday.

"We have a few seniors that didn't get in a lot this year; we were really looking to try and give them an opportunity to play because they have been at all the practices and everything," said Miranda, a second baseman and pitcher.

"Although we did want to win, our main thing was like let's have fun, it's the last game, the last time we will be together. Let's make the best of it and let's go for a win."

A highlight of the game came in the sixth inning when PHS head coach Scott Goldsmith removed most of his seniors from the game. The players shook hands as they left the diamond, prompting hearty applause from the crowd on hand at Valley Road.

"It was real powerful because you realize this is the last time that you are playing with all these guys," asserted Miranda, who took the loss on the mound against Ho-Val. "You usually don't shake hands on the baseball field; it was real special."

It was special for PHS to break through with a 12-6 win over WW/P-S on May 23 in its next-to-last game.

"We have been in almost every game," said Miranda. "To finally get that win; it was nice."

For head coach Goldsmith, it was nice to have a group of seniors who kept spirits high even as the losses piled up.

"This group of seniors are totally into it," said Goldsmith, whose corps of seniors included Chris Brooks, David Staller, David Griffin, Adam Friedman, Steve Barsamian, and Joe D'Eramo along with Miranda.

"They never put their heads down - throughout the whole season I've had three coaches come up to me and say the same thing; that for a team that is 0 and something, we are constantly up. We were never down; we kept on fighting."

Goldsmith singled out Miranda as a positive force for the Little Tigers.

"Out of any senior in this program, he has given the most for the last four years, starting since his sophomore year and playing since his freshman year," added Goldsmith.

"He definitely brings a leadership quality; the kids look to him. His energy level is constantly up there; there is never a down moment. The score could be 20-0 and that kid will still be smiling."

The win over WW/P-S gave everyone on the team reason to smile. "It came way too late to get the monkey off the back and get the season rolling with that win," said Goldsmith.

"We would definitely have preferred it in week one or week two and build on it then. But with this group of seniors, it paid off. They came flying out on Friday, John had a no-hitter going. There were 24 guys that came with us, we got 23 in. Everybody did their part."

Goldsmith is hoping that the lessons learned by his younger players this spring will play a part in getting PHS on the winning track.

"I think the younger guys now know how much hard work they have to put into the

offseason and that it will pay off for a better season next year," said Goldsmith.

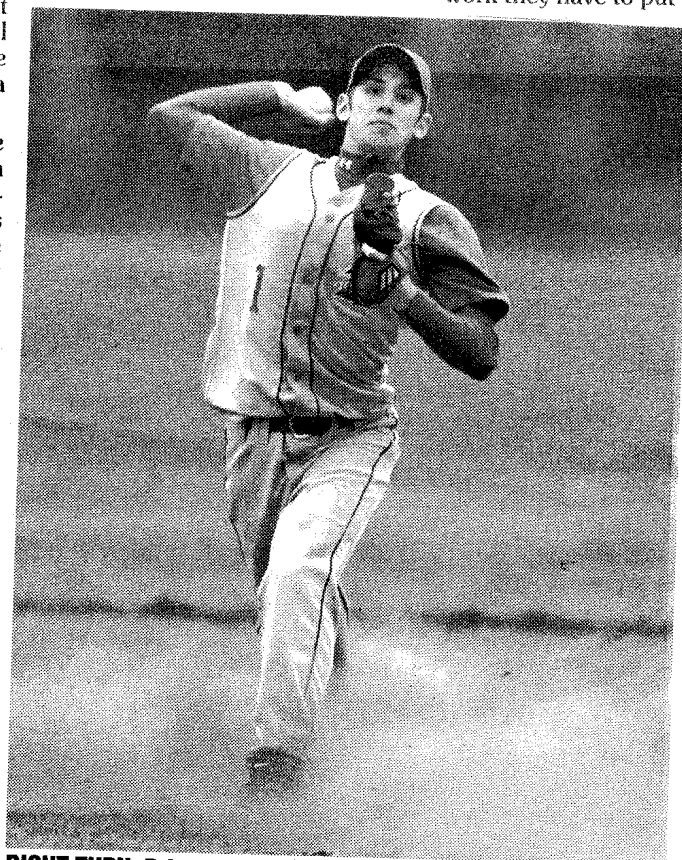
"We are looking forward to our sophomore class stepping up. We brought a couple of guys up to get some experience at the varsity level. We have the majority of them playing legion ball; we hope to get a bunch into the fall ball too."

Miranda, for his part, sees better days ahead for the program. "Emotionally and morale-wise; we were there the whole year," said Miranda.

"We never sort of got the ball rolling. I think next year, we'll be alright because we had so many young guys that came in and stepped up. Although they didn't play well every game, they got in decent time and hopefully they will get more consistent next year."

And those younger players certainly learned something about character from their senior teammates.

—Bill Alden



RIGHT TURN: Princeton High baseball senior star John Miranda turns a double play earlier this spring. Last Thursday, Miranda and the Little Tigers wrapped up their season by falling 6-0 to Hopewell Valley.