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Colonials' Yuhas to play with Longwood Lancers

BY TIM MORRIS Staff Writer

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The first time representatives of Longwood University came calling, Mat Yuhas admits that he was not ready.

"I wasn't ready to be six-and-a-half hours away" from home," he said. "I knew I would go to Brookdale for a year."

The baseball coaches from Longwood, which is in Farmville, Va., were willing to wait for the right-handed pitcher and kept a scholarship offer on the table. The year at Brookdale Community College, Lincroft, proved to be just what Yuhas needed and now he and Longwood have hooked up again.

Yuhas, a Freehold High School graduate, is now a Lancer and Longwood's coaches are looking at Yuhas as a potential starting pitcher.

Longwood will be getting a polished pitcher who proved himself at the highest level of junior college baseball. Brookdale won the Garden State Athletic Conference and Region XIX championships in 2009 and finished fourth at the Junior College World Series.

"Brookdale was a real good learning experience," said Yuhas, who followed in the footsteps of his father, Vic Yuhas, who also played at Brookdale. "As the season went on, I gained more and more confidence. It was good to go to a school that was good enough to go to the World Series and to be good enough to play for them."

Pitching for a nationally ranked team had its rewards for a pitcher.

"It was good knowing that when you go out there you will get run support," he said. "Our defense was great."

Yuhas, whose uncle, Vinnie Yuhas, pitched for the Kansas City Royals, has four pitches — fastball, curve, slider and

change-up — and will throw any one of them at any time in the count. His fastball is up to 91 mph.

"I worked on all of them [pitches]," he said. "I'm confident I can throw any one of them for a strike."

Yuhas went 3-0 on the mound for Coach Johnny Johnson's Jersey Blues. Johnson considered Yuhas one of the team's most important additions in 2009. Yuhas had a 1.70 ERA during the regular season. He had one start in the Junior College World Series, pitching 6.2 innings, allowing two earned runs with nine strikeouts. He did not figure in the decision.

Yuhas talks to his uncle, who now lives in New York, quite often and gets advice from the former major leaguer.

"He says you have to give 100 percent," Yuhas remarked. "He tells me that no matter what, you can't let up at any time. You have to try your hardest."

That is solid advice Yuhas is planning to follow as he makes the adjustment to NCAA Division I college baseball.