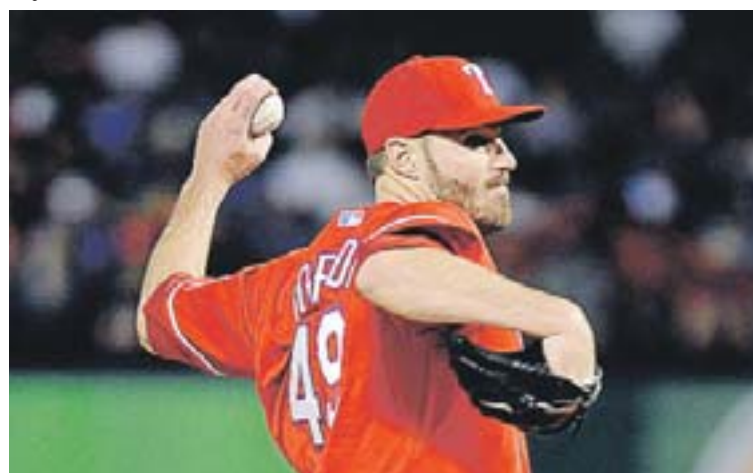


LAMORINDA SPORTS

What a Relief

Poreda overcomes Tommy John; Pitches for Rangers

By Nick Marnell



Aaron Poreda

Photo provided

Aaron Poreda stood on the mound facing down Major League Baseball's third leading active home run hitter—and he couldn't have been happier to do it because Poreda was pitching in the MLB for the first time in nearly five years.

The 2004 Campolindo graduate and Diablo Foothill Athletic League Most Valuable Pitcher starred at the University of San Francisco. In 2007, the Chicago White Sox picked him in the first round of the Major League Baseball draft.

However, after a fast track to the Majors in 2009, and a trade to the San Diego Padres, Poreda lost his ability to throw strikes. At its worst, his walk ratio exceeded one per inning. Eventually the Padres left him unprotected in the 2011 Rule 5 draft, and Poreda was claimed by the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Poreda knew the reason for his deteriorating performance, but he hoped he could overcome the injury. "My arm was a little sore, but I was battling, doing everything I could," he

said. But the pain in his left elbow would not go away.

He pitched for the Pirates' Double-A franchise until finally, after a game in 2012, he could not bend his arm. Poreda was diagnosed with a damaged ulnar collateral ligament. "We had tried rehab, we tried injections. I discussed it with my parents, my agent. I knew it was time," said Poreda.

He underwent Tommy John surgery that fall. The following March, the Pirates released him.

Newly married, unemployed, and working through an intense, painful rehabilitation, Poreda said that he questioned whether he wanted to continue his baseball career. He credited his love and appreciation for the game for trumping all of the doubts. "The hardest part was the day-to-day grind," he explained. "It was a long, tiresome rehab, knowing that you're not going to pitch for a year. But I was going to make it back, or die trying."

His hard work paid off. In October, Poreda's arm strength had returned and his agent set up a bullpen session in Arizona. The Texas Rangers, one of nine teams to attend the workout, offered Poreda a minor league contract. "It was awesome," he said. "I felt like I was given a second opportunity and I was going to make the most of it."

He opened the 2014 regular season at Triple-A Round Rock. He pitched in five games - tallying five strikeouts and only one walk in four innings.

Then, on April 18, Poreda got the call he was hoping to get—he was called up to the Majors.

"I was in my hotel room in Omaha that morning, feeling a little under the weather, and my pitching coach called. He said to get on a plane to Arlington," he recalled. "Yeah, I was stoked."

The very next day, Poreda was summoned out of the Rangers' bullpen in the sixth inning. He faced designated hitter Adam Dunn, a left-handed hitter with 443 career home runs.

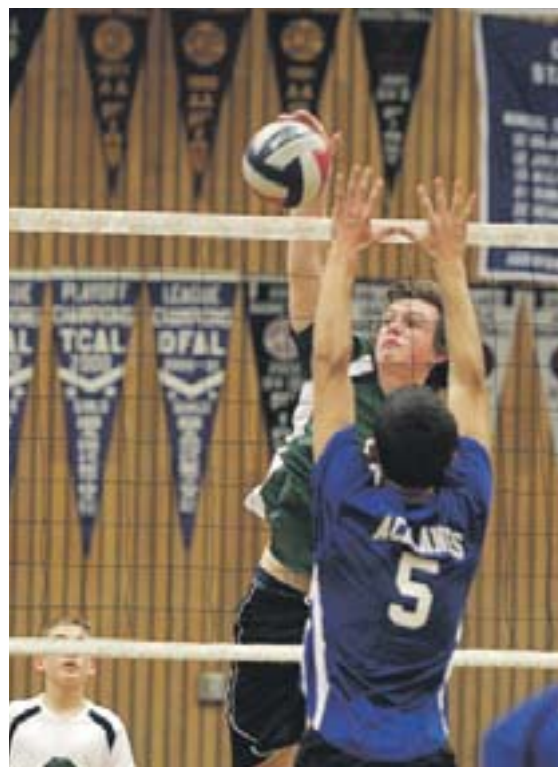
"I took a couple of deep breaths," he said of his first pitch. The 6-foot-6 lefty cut loose a 96-mph fastball. Dunn swung and lifted a harmless fly ball which was easily hauled in by the Rangers' center fielder.

Poreda had officially made it back.

Through May 4, Poreda made six relief appearances for the Rangers, compiling a 1-0 record and an earned run average of 0.00.

Campolindo Aims for DFAL Title

By Marissa Harnett



Acalanes defeated Miramonte on April 30 for its first win of the season.

Photos Gint Federas

As the boys' volleyball season winds down, Campolindo is in a good position to take the league title. With two games to go in DFAL play, the Cougars remain undefeated with a record of 8-0 (30-2 overall). As of May 1, Miramonte is 2-5 in league (5-6 overall) while Acalanes sits at 1-6 (1-11 overall).

Campo's long running program is arguably a good reason that the team is on top and seeks its fourth straight NCS title. The team has worked to improve by pitting itself against high caliber competition.

Head coach David Chen acknowledges his good fortune to have deep talent, but realizes that high expectations come with that. He feels that the boys' response to the pressure has matured throughout the season.

"The guys have started to internalize all the external pressures to find strength and confidence within themselves as a group," he said.

Chen looks forward to the upcoming NCS tournament. "The past players fought so hard to get the program to a position to even compete for a title, and now we are working on our fourth straight," he said.

Although confident and proud,

Chen remains cautious. "We understand that the most dangerous team is the team who is gelling and peaking during playoffs and have the belief that they can and will beat anyone," he explained.

Miramonte has had a volatile season. Half of Miramonte's team returned from last year, and the other half was brand new to volleyball. "I wanted to make sure to give the new guys a strong foundation in fundamental skills and techniques," new head coach Lisa Bachtold explained.

After notching three wins in four games in the preseason, they sustained three losses in four games once league play began.

Despite up-and-down performances, Bachtold is happy with her players' efforts. "Miramonte has been doing very well, considering this is only its second year of essentially a new program," she said.

The returning players have also played a role in developing the new players. "The guys with experience have shown a tremendous amount of leadership bringing the new guys up to speed," Bachtold said.

She sees each game, win or lose, as a learning opportunity. "We ask

ourselves what can we take away from this experience in order to be more successful the next time," she explained.

Acalanes has had some difficulty gaining momentum this season. The team saw a major personnel shift from last year. "The team is much different than last year's because out of 17 guys we really only have 5 that have played volleyball for more than 1 year, compared to last year where most of the seniors had been playing since they were around 13 years old," head coach Mason Mulvaney explained.

With a roster of mostly freshman and sophomores, the team is young and inexperienced. "It has been tougher than previous years," Mulvaney acknowledged. "But I think the boys are having a good time and improving," he continued.

Mulvaney was particularly happy with the improvement he saw in both the Dougherty Valley and Las Lomas games. The win against Miramonte on April 30 helped boost confidence.

There are two more games remaining before NCS tournament play begins May 14.

Cougar Football

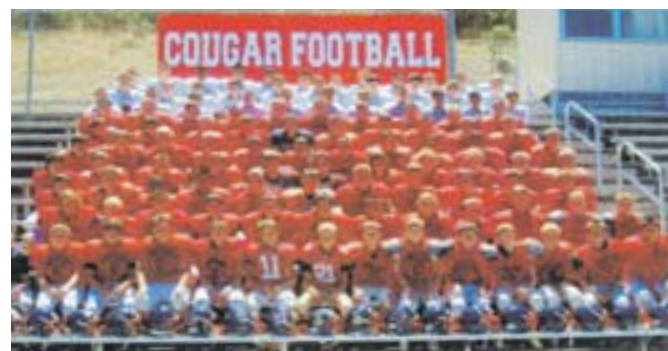
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