He had that smooth delivery with a major league pitcher, and I don't suffer through his junior varsity.

Sometimes, his cool, silky attitude frustrated his high school coaches. But his "potential" seemed to be peppered throughout conversations. His college coach actually cut him from the team in his freshman year, and he came close to doing it again the following year.

It took it what it took, but that was the spark Raczka needed. He returned to his dorm with tears in his eyes until that old fierce resolve came back.

"It's about not quitting but doing it right," he said. "I've seen kids want to just pack things in because they don't feel like they're making it. They're like, 'Mike there are a lot of unfair shades in life. You know? You've just got to read and believe in what you're doing.'"

Raczka didn't set out to make the majors. He didn't set out to dominate a storied college franchise. He didn't even set out to be a Blue Jay. Raczka was just one of the gang growing up on Foley Street in the '70s. He made the streets with his glove dangling from his handlebars, looking for someone to play against.

He'd play up games and rivalries in whatever sport was being offered that day. It could be a game of Russian roulette. The lanky lefty could throw fast. He had great form, but nobody knew where his pitch would cross the plate...not even Raczka.

When it comes to Major League hurlers, Raczka was an unlikely prospect.

It all comes down to fundamentals

By JOHN GORALSKI

Mike Raczka wouldn't quit and played his way to the major leagues.

It wasn't like it is today," he said. "In those days, there wasn't anything from midget football to a full ride. 'Then, he turned and said, 'Mike Raczka was the best left-hander in the history of University of New Haven baseball—without a doubt. He's the greatest left-hander in the history of University of New Haven baseball—without a question. He's the greatest left-hander that I've ever coached,'" said Vieira.

Mike Raczka was the best left-hander in the history of University of New Haven baseball—without a question. He's the greatest left-hander that I've ever coached," said Vieira. "He said, 'OK. Then you've got a full ride. Then, turn in the night, and take a walk,'" said Vieira. "The fact that he came back says a lot," said Vieira. "I think that's what's all about. Maybe that was the answer for him to become a major league pitcher. He just came on and came on. He wasn't great the first few years with the team. He was sort of the way he was. We had great teams then, but he came on by the time he was a junior or a senior, and he was the best that I ever coached.

"Raczka returned to practice the next day. He watched teammates practicing in uniforms as he worked out on the sidelines in practice gear. Captains ran him past fatigue. Coaches criticized his every move, but Raczka wouldn't quit. After a few days, Vieira offered him a second chance.

"I told him that I wanted to play for him," said Raczka. "It was an honor to play for the University of New Haven, for Coach V. It was a mind set, and I didn't learn until it was a sophomore. After the first couple of games, I finally got it. Then, I went off on a tear.

Raczka wasn't satisfied with making the team, he set out to be the best. He is still ranked in the top 10 of six pitching categories at UNH and still holds the school record for strikeouts (312). He is ranked second in single season strikeouts (145), third in innings pitched (235.1), sixth in appearances (55) and victories (29), and eighth in single season innings pitched (115.1).

Raczka was named as the school's male athlete of the year in 1984. He was inducted into the UNH Hall of Fame in 1998, and he was selected to the All-Pitcher team as one of the best players in his coaches 45 years on the diamond.

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