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Armed and dangerous



Press Enterprise/Bill Hughes

GEISINGER ORTHOPEDIC SURGEON DR. STEVEN GOLDBERG points out a torn ligament visible in a MR image seen on a computer screen on Thursday in Bloomsburg.

With Tommy John surgery on rise, pitchers should be mindful of the effects and how they deliver pitches

By ARTHUR DOWELL

Press Enterprise Writer

Millville's Brittan Kittle was in the middle of throwing a no-hitter against Montgomery this past season, though he had no idea.

Then he started feeling pain in his pitching arm and asked to be taken out.

"(The coaches) said, 'Listen, I think you should finish this for us," Kittle said. "They has to deal with.

never did tell me I had a no-hitter going."

with since Little League — Kittle wound up finishing the game without allowing a hit, piling up 10 strikeouts along the way. Kittle estimates he threw 100 pitches.

Yet staying in the game could have cost Kittle his career.

It's a risk every baseball coach and pitcher

Despite the pain — something he's dealt enough to know whether I was pushing it or, struction (UCL) — or Tommy John surgery Eh, it's sore and can get one more inning out is on the rise. of him," Millville coach Andy Belolan said. "His dad was even yelling down, 'One more inning!' But if he wanted to come out, we would have done that.

"It's not worth the pain for a no-hitter." Arm injuries are not new in baseball, but tendon in the body or reuse a donated tendon. the number of injuries, most particularly

"With him, he's somebody that's old those needing ulnar collateral ligament recon-

The procedure is done when a person needs their UCL replaced. Doctors often use the patient's palmaris tendon —something 85 percent of people have, and does not lead to loss of function — but can replace it with some other

Please see TOMMY page 13

Bloom grad Hock embraces change in an effort to keep his arm healthy

By ARTHUR DOWELL Press Enterprise Writer

The most consistent thing in Colton Hock's baseball career has been change.

Since his days as a standout at Bloomsburg High School as a starting pitcher, he's changed scenery attending Stanford, 2,790 miles away from his hometown — and switched roles from being an ace starting pitcher to a reliable Cardinal reliev-

Hock threw 93-94 mph pitches in high school. Though he's generally stayed in that area, he's also been clocked throwing 97 mph.

One thing that hasn't changed, however, is his delivery and arm health. It's something he's grateful

"I've never missed a stretch of BLOOMSBURG time from any of my teams," Hock said. "I guess it's a blessing that I wasn't the best player in Little League.

Hock pitched well this past season, ending his sophomore campaign at Stanford with a 2.03 ERA, 25th best in Division I. Hock had 61

strikeouts in 57 2/3 innings. Those numbers were enough to get him named to the All



GRADUATE

COLTON HOCK delivers a pitch during a Cape Cod League game earlier this summer.

invitation to play in the Cape Cod League this summer.

Hock currently plays for the Cotuit Kettleers in the Cape Cod League, which is a hotbed filled with MLB scouts.

"A big part of my success comes Pac-12 team. Hock also received an from keeping my arm healthy and

being able to pitch on short notice,"

Hock said. That was especially true as he made the transition to the bullpen at

Hock often took five or six days off with some sort of throwing routine between starts in high school after throwing a high number of pitches.

The same can't be said as a re-

"It's hard to know what days you're going to pitch," Hock said. 'If I throw 20 to 25 pitches, then I'm expected to be available to pitch the

Hock is dealing with more change as he converts back into a starter.

As of Wednesday, Hock had pitched in seven games for the Kettleers, starting four of them. He's 0-3 with a 3.03 ERA.

At a time when elbow injuries seem to be on the rise at all levels of competition (and some think consistently changing roles as a starter and reliever adds to the numbers), Hock has managed to take care of

his arm. Hock credits Jaeger Bands and the Stanford trainers' year-round workouts for keeping him in shape and getting his arm ready during the

long and unpredictable season. Please see HOCK page 13



Press Enterprise/Keith Haupt

ZACH LYNN, right, stands with his father **Greg Lynn** at their home in Danville on Friday afternoon. Zach Lynn had Tommy John surgery at Geisinger last year.

Danville's Lynn had to have elbow repaired by Goldberg

By ARTHUR DOWELL Press Enterprise Writer

Zach Lynn felt the symptoms in his right arm, his pitching arm, for

a vear. He ignored them and continued

to pitch for the handful of teams he

Then in March 2015 while the Danville native was pitching in a youth league game, he noticed issues with his control. He felt a sen-

Please see LYNN page 13

Lynn

Continued from page 9

sation in his arm, and after 45 pitches, was removed from the game.

"I thought it was my shoulder, and it ended up being my elbow," Lynn said. "I felt a tingle in my arm and the pain progressed, eventually going numb."

did he know, that was the last pitch he would throw at ball level. a competitive level.

Lynn had torn his ulnar collateral ligament and required career-ending Tommy John surgery.

Using another tendon from Lynn's body, Geisinger orthopedic surgeon Dr. Steven Goldberg repaired the damaged UCL.

Goldberg, who is an advocate for pitchers' arm safety in cooperation with Danville Little League, says the solution starts with eliminating the possibility at a young age by educating players, coaches and trainers.

"The awareness of the amount of throwing is the main way to prevent this from being an even bigger frequency, and that will happen once more research trickles down to the high school level," Goldberg said. ... If one kid needs it, then it's one too many."

Lynn was cleared to play in January, but due to other issues, he decided to step away from baseball, saying the sport "isn't in the foreseeable future."

The safety precautions many amateur leagues, including Little League International took, was implementing a pitch count.

Little League implemented the Pitch Smart program in 2006 to ensure the health and safety of its players.

And it's something the PIAA will start doing next

The PIAA has played under an innings limit setup since 1990. The rule stated that four to five innings thrown required two days rest, and six or more innings thrown required three days rest. No pitcher could throw more than 14 innings per week.

One pitch constituted an

"When Little League and Major League Baseball for years have been using pitch counts, we all felt in the state association (that it was) a when needed. business of when, and not PIAA executive director Robert Lombardi said.

The PIAA steering committee will establish a set of hits home," Greg Lynn said. rules to present to the PIAA Board of Directors, who think can happen to you type vote on any rule changes. thing. My advice is if the The hope is to have it estab- kid's complaining, rest him lished well before the start and possibly get him seen. of spring sports on March 6. If pain progresses, get an

is thought to be a step in the for Zach. If I had done that a right direction, especially year earlier, maybe he could

when it comes to children. Former Chicago White ing."

Sox and Chicago Cubs pitcher, Matt Karchner, a Berwick graduate, wants to see more done, especially at the Little League level.

"In Little League, there is such an intensity to win at such a little age," Karchner said. "It used to be about teaching and developing the game, not so much with winning. It should be about learning proper mechanics before winning.

Mechanics come into play Lynn's last pitch bounced with the debate over whethin front of home plate. Little er kids should be throwing curveballs at the youth base-

> Studies done by both Little League and the University of North Carolina found that there's no correlation between throwing a curveball and arm injuries, stating it comes down to mechanics.

Former Danville Little League coach Dave Ross never taught his kids how to throw any pitch other than a fastball and a circle-change-

"We never taught a kid how to throw a curveball," Ross said. "Every once in a while, we saw kids try to snap one because they saw that on TV. ... I'm a believer that a good changeup is as good of a pitch as any.

With what Ross knows today, he isn't sure if he'd allow his kids to pitch, and thinks parents should be aware of the circumstances.

"I don't think (parents) understand much of the effects pitching has on the kids' arms," Ross said. "I don't know if I'd have my kid pitching in Little League."

Karchner thinks it's more of an issue because coaches don't know what to look for.

"Unfortunately, a lot of the coaches in Little League volunteers," Karchner said. "It does get pretty technical and you can't expect them to know everything. Trying to get kids to do something over and over again consistently is a tough

Karchner thinks kids who are serious about pitching should attend clinics that teach proper mechanics.

Karchner often tells people that if they want the help, he'll gladly give lessons.

Ross never had a player or pitcher with arm problems, claiming much of that is because he could tell pitchers were getting tired when the pitches were going a third of the speed slower.

Ross and Karchner both think parents should step in

That's something Lynn's father, Greg Lynn, have done differently.

"It doesn't hit you until it "It's one of those you don't Establishing pitch counts MRI. I wish I had done that have gotten back to pitch-



Photo provided

BLOOMSBURG GRADUATE COLTON HOCK delivers a pitch during a Cape Cod League game earlier this summer.

Hock

Continued from page 9

"Our trainers are our doctors. ... They have the best every-day equipment," Hock said. "The coaches are conleague clubs, seeking the latplayer health.' While Hock is fortunate to

ing injury, he does see the is- week, they'd be lying.' sue at hand.

my John surgery) happens is youth levels. simply from overuse," Hock said. "Whether it's pitching player's arm or career to win a lot on short notice, pitching one game," Hock said.

a lot as a kid or conditioning

Hock also thinks that it's up to pitchers to be smart and speak up when they don't feel like they're at 100 percent.

"I remember kids being able to throw hard and not take care of their arms, and think, they can throw whensistently meeting with big ever and however hard they want, but it catches up," Hock est innovations and ideas for said. "I call it competitive immature action. If someone says they never pitched have not dealt with a linger- for more than one team in a

Hock is a believer in pitch "I think the reason (Tom- counts, especially at the

"It's not worth it to ruin a

SCOREBOARD

Today in Sports History

July 24, 1986

• Claiming he is drug free, pitcher Dennis "Oil Can" Boyd announces his intent to return to the Boston Red Sox.

July 24, 1996

 Ashley Lynn and Lauren Shepulski combine on a no-hitter and Danville qualifies for the Minor Division state softball tournament with a 22-5 win over Wellsboro.

July 24, 2006

 Adam LaRoche hits two home runs, driving in four runs, and the Atlanta Braves build a big lead and hold off a late charge for a 10-8 victory over the Philadelphia Phillies.

CALENDAR Today No events scheduled

TRANSACTIONS BASEBALL

BASEBALL

American League
BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Placed OF Joey
Rickard on the 15-day DL, retroactive to
Thursday, Recalled OF Dariel Alvarez from
Norfolk (IL). Sent RHP Darren O'Day to
Bowie (EL) for a rehab assignment.
LOS ANGELES ANGELS — Optioned C
Juan Graterol to Salt Lake (PCL). Recalled C
Carlos Perez from Salt Lake.
OAKLAND ATHLETICS — Placed C Stephen Vogt on the family medical leave list.
Selected the contract of C Bruce Maxwell
from Nashville (PCL). Transferred RHP Fernando Rodriguez to the 60-day DL.
SEATTLE MARINERS — Placed SS Ketel
Marte on the 15-day DL.

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Interleague at N.Y. Yankees -130/+120

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at Pittsburgh	-142/+132	
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Chicago	-155/+145	
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at Kansas City	-115/+105	

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FS1 — FIA World Endurance Championship, Six Hours of Nürburgring, at Nürburg, Germany 7:30 a.m. NBCSN — Formula One, Hungarian

ARENA FOOTBALL

Cleveland at Arizona

AUTO RACING

9 p.m.

7 a.m.

Grand Prix, at Budapest, Hungary

NBCSN — NASCAR, Sprint Cup Series, The Combat Wounded Coalition 400 at The Brickyard, at Indianapolis

BASKETBALL

NBA — Exhibition, Men's national teams, China vs. United States, at Los Angeles

CYCLING

10:30 a.m. NBCSN — Tour de France, Stage 21 (final), Chantilly, France to Paris

DRAG RACING 3 p.m. FOX — NHRA, Mopar Mile-High

Nationals, finals, at Denver

FITNESS TRAINING

ESPN2 — CrossFit Games, at Carson, Calif. 7 p.m. CrossFit Games, at Carson, Calif.

GOLF

8:30 a.m. GOLF — Senior British Open, final round, at Carnoustie, Scotland

NBC — LPGA Tour, UL International Crown, final round, at Gurnee, Ill.

TV-RADIO

1 p.m. GÖLF — PGA Tour, RBC Canadian Open, final round, at Oakville, Ontario

GOLF — LPGA Tour, UL International Crown, final round, at Gurnee, Ill.

3 p.m. CBS — PGA Tour, RBC Canadian Open, final round, at Oakville, Ontario NBC — American Century Championship, final round, at Lake Tahoe, Nev.

GÖLF — Web.com Tour, Utah Championship, final round, at Lehi, Utah

HORSE RACING

4 p.m. FS2 — Saratoga Live, Coaching Club American Oaks, at Saratoga Springs,

MLB

TBS — San Francisco at N.Y. Yankees SNY — N.Y. Mets at Miami 1:30 p.m. Comcast, ROOT — Philadelphia at

Pittsburgh ESPN — L.A. Dodgers at St. Louis

SOCCER FOX — MLS, New York City at New York Red Bulls

3 p.m. ESPN — MLS, Seattle at Sporting

Kansas City

5 p.m.

5 p.m. ESPN — International Champions Cup 2016, Internazionale vs. Paris Saint Germain, at Eugene, Ore.

ESPN2 — U.S. Open Series: WTA Tour, Bank of the West Open, championship, at Stanford. Calif.

Tommy

Continued from page 9

The patient is then placed in a couple of different splints in the first 6-8 weeks. They then begin exercises to regain their range of motion and after two months, muscle strength.

That's followed with a light throwing regimen to get the elbow used to extending and bending. Once the pain subsides, they start light tossing until they gradually progress by increasing distance and speed and repetition.

Overall, a patient will spend roughly a year rehab-

Since Tommy John first underwent the procedure in 1974, www.mlbreports.com reports there have been 1,292 recorded cases - with another 12 players pending results – in MLB and Minor League

baseball. From 2012-2016, there have been more cases recorded (143) — including three in tain age — mostly in the ear- ents is the key to an athlete's July — than in the entire de- ly teens — to start throwing health. cade of the 1990s (106).

procedure.

that has caught the attenfrom Major League Baseball that,"

to ensuring the safety of its ball isn't for everybody.' players' young arms. Prior count system called Pitch

Smart. The program correlates hold off until their teens. a set number of pitches to

group is different.

applied by some today. established in 1990 — to a Nick Caringi said. pitch count format next sea-

'It's about mechanics'

Though the number of ics. Tommy John surgeries is Steven Goldberg, an orthopedic surgeon at Geisinger, says "it's not exceedingly common in the young athletes in the his players how to throw a ing their durability. region.

the change of weather mak- any pitch. ing athletes focus on playing other sports, Goldberg said.

'I think it helps because they're going to be using different muscle groups in different sports," Goldberg said. "It allows them to become more durable and athletic and still works with their coordination and timing."

doctors and league administrators agree one of the biggest factors is the pitch all five leagues at the time, It's not uncommon to see a

is whether a kid throwing a

curveball at the Little League

down the road.



MILLVILLE'S BRITTAN KITTLE tosses out a pitch during the top of the third inning in a District 4 Class A semifinal game at Bowman Field in Williamsport earlier this year.

curveballs. And some, like

The issue is something to properly pitch. and has trickled down to a about mechanics. There are it's even more important to number of amateur leagues. 17-year-olds that shouldn't think of the individual.' Ten years ago, Little throw it because their me-League took its first steps chanics are awful. The curve-

Little League, along with comes down to mechanics, but Lynn said. still thinks a pitcher should

"Even though a properly certain days rest. Each age thrown curveball has the ball and participate in other same impact on a young arm sports. Prior to Pitch Smart, Lit- as a properly thrown straight tle League had an innings pitch ... pitchers should wait limit in place, something that until they can shave to throw was common in most youth a curveball, which allows baseball programs and is still them to receive more coaching to ensure they are throw-PIAA recently announced ing with proper mechanics," its 1.422 schools will switch Little League Senior Director

> Longtime Danville Little the issues starting in Little League because of mechan-

"Kids are using more arm seemingly on the rise, Dr. than legs," Ross said. "If they want to throw harder, they use their legs." Ross never taught any of

curveball, stating a good fast-Much of that is in part to ball or changeup is as good as shortening the muscle," Alb-Another contributing fac-

multiple teams in a calendar

'Awareness is key'

Zack Lynn, a Danville Most players, coaches, stretch when his arm started to hurt. Lynn was pitching for

count, but also have opinions and following 45 pitches in kid throw 92, 93 these days,' on other contributing factors. a game, started to feel an Ross said. "If you don't throw One of the biggest debates unsettling pain in what he that hard, you don't usuthought was his shoulder.

2015 and thinks communicathrowing hard these days." Some think there's a cer- tion amongt coaches and par-

communication arm injury. "Open Little League Interna- former major league pitcher and awareness is key ... the tional does not keep statistics and Berwick native Matt more each person is thinkor records of surgeries if a Karchner, don't think there ing about it, the more likely player in the league needs the is an age limit, but rather they're going to be able to talk when a pitcher can learn how about what each athlete is doing and do the right thing for "It's not about age. It's the kid," Goldberg said. "It's tion of league administrators more individualized than important to think of the Karchner said. "It's team and trying to win, but

> Looking back, Lynn would have done a few things differ-

ently. "I wouldn't have played for to 2006, the non-profit orga- the American Sports Medi- as many leagues, and taken nization implemented a pitch cine Institute, also finds it a little more care of myself,"

Little League advises play-

ers to take time out of the

year to step away from base-

Danville American Legion manager Harold Albertson finds that as kids get older, they begin to specialize in one

sport. He also sees a few other contributing factors, including something often overover from its innings limit of Operations and Education looked, but important for all baseball players.

"I think back 20, 30 years League coach Dave Ross sees ago, and kids were playing catch all the time," Albertson said. "Today they don't. Today, they only do that when a coach tell them it's time for practice."

> Albertson also thinks that athletes spend too much time in the weight room and limit-

'Kids are bench pressing, ertson said. "They don't properly take care of themselves tor is player's constant use and stretch after workouts. of the arm when playing for Because of that, pitching injuries have increased. It's unbelievable."

'Kids stretch the limits' Ross doesn't think it's a

graduate, was playing in five coincidence that with pitchleagues during a six-month ers throwing harder, the number of UCL surgeries are increasing.

"Kids stretch the limits. ally start a game. I believe Goldberg performed UCL it's been a trend for the last level leads to elbow injuries surgery on Lynn in March 10 years. You see everybody

And it's not just pitchers their body."

who are at risk, Goldberg said, but catchers as well. "Although they aren't

throwing as hard as they can every throw like a pitcher, they are throwing many times throughout a game,' Goldberg said. "They are at risk for throwing out an arm ... and in many cases, they are often pitchers themselves." That's the case for Kittle,

who has dealt with shoulder pain since he nearly tore a tendon when he was a 12-year-old pitcher and catcher, but continued to play both positions throughout high Belolan, Kittle's high school coach, focuses on the

fundamentals of throwing early and often throughout the season, and doesn't go a day without talking to his pitchers. "I have them throwing every day. I found the more you use your arm, the better if

Belolan said. "But not a day goes by where I'm not asking a pitcher if he's okay." Belolan, like every coach interviewed for this story,

you're throwing correctly,"

never had a player suffer an Ross thinks the communication should go further than

just coach and player. "I think coaches have to get along well and must work together," Ross said. "They can't pitch a kid back-to-back days or overuse these kids' arms. The coaches have to be talking to one another because with these different rules for different leagues,

you can hurt a kid's arm eas-One thing is certain when it comes to the health of pitchers - each case is dif-

Though most of the people interviewed thought pitch counts are a step in the right direction, some did say there couldn't be a set number because each pitcher is differ-

"I was never a true believer in counting the pitches," Ross said. "Maybe I say that because different pitchers warm up differently. A kid that throws 30 pitches in a game may have thrown 70 in the bullpen. You just don't

know." Belolan thinks some kids have the body to withstand a high number of pitches with a few days rest, but some need to be watched more closely. "If you have a kid that's

6-foot-4, 220, they're equipped

to pitch like that," Belolan

said. "But not everybody is built like that and you especially have to be aware of that with kids." Colton Hock, a Bloomsburg graduate who now pitches at Stanford, can't pinpoint a single factor in

the rise of these injuries,

but knows something has to change. "I have actually heard of people getting the surgery before they start having any issues," Hock said. "I think it's something that is inevitable. I don't know if they are close to a cure for it. There are more specific studies and more equipment for specific bodies. There are specific programs being developed for specific

"It ultimately comes down to having good communication and an understanding of

individuals and arms.