

**Nov. 28 College Baseball**

## **Steinert grad, MCCC shortstop Constantini bound for West Virginia**

**By Rich Fisher**

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And yet another senior from the 2010 Steinert baseball team has used Mercer County Community College as a springboard to bigger things.

Mike Constantini recently signed a letter of intent to play for West Virginia University after he completes his sophomore year at Mercer, which includes playing for the Vikings this coming spring.

Last June, Constantini's fellow Steinert Class of '10 teammate James Pugliese was drafted from Mercer by the Chicago Cubs.

"I feel like I could have made the jump to Division 1 out of high school, but going to Mercer was the best decision I ever made, because not only do I feel I can play D1 now, I feel like I can make a real impact.

"Coach (Matt) Wolski and my other coaches definitely helped me out physically, but the biggest change from high school to college for me was my mental side. The Mercer coaches taught me so much about this and how crucial it is."

Constantini culminated an outstanding high school career in the summer of 2010 when he was named the Mercer County American Legion League's Most Valuable Player and Gold Glove shortstop playing for Hamilton Post 31.

During his freshman year for Mercer, he hit .291 (32-for-110) with five doubles, a triple, home run and a team-high 20 walks. He led the Vikes with 32 runs scored, had 17 RBIs and displayed his usual slick fielding skills.

West Virginia approached Constantini last summer, prompting him to pay a visit to Morgantown and make a few phone calls.

"I really liked the school," he said. "The facilities were first class and it was just a good match for me. And playing in the big 12 will be a great experience." (When Constantini arrives the Mountaineers will have moved from the Big East Conference to the Big 12).

WVU is coming off a 28-27 season in which it went 14-13 in the Big East, after going 27-30 in 2010. The two years prior, West Virginia was a combined 72-39.

The Mountaineers are coached by Greg Van Zant, who has been at the helm since 1995 and got WVU into the NCAA Tournament in 1996 but not since then. West Virginia has made several Big East Tournament appearances.

As a JUCO transfer, Constantini will likely be given a chance to start immediately as coaches don't want incoming players with just two years of eligibility sitting on the bench. It will be up to him to take advantage of the opportunity.

"They have told me I will be playing shortstop," Constantini said. "I hope to be starting next year but I know it will not just be handed to me. I will have to compete everyday and work hard to earn a starting job."

Constantini said he has not been given a to-do list by the Mountaineer staff.

"Coach Van Zant has not told me anything specific to work on," he said. "But for me it's staying with my new mental approach at the plate and truly believing in it. It is key to having the year I feel like I can have."

Constantini is just happy to have his future set and credits his coaches and parents for his progress.

"Without them I wouldn't be where I am today as player and as a person," he said.

And where he will be tomorrow, is competing at college baseball's highest level.