

# Imperial flying high on baseball diamond

## Air Force-bound Davis grad taking part in All-State Series

By Scott Spruill



YAKIMA, Wash. -- Before he heads to the Air Force Academy for basic training in July, Jonathan Imperial is squeezing in as much baseball as he can.

It helps when you're in high demand.

After earning Columbia Basin Big Nine all-league honors for the third year in a row, the Davis graduate resumed his summer station in centerfield for the Yakima Pepsi Beetles, who just completed a four-game league series with Kennewick, and last week he was named MVP at a Class 4A-3A All-State feeder game at Eastmont.

Those all-league and feeder-game credentials have ticketed Imperial for more playing time as he joins 72 of the state's top seniors in the All-State Series this weekend at Parker Faller Field.

These are certainly busy days for Jonathan and his family, who own and operate Imperial's Garden farm in Wapato and are used to chasing after their athletically gifted kids. This year, though, has been extra special.

The attention was on Jonathan last week with his Davis graduation and this week it turns to older sister Bethany, who will graduate from Oregon State University on Saturday. Bethany, a Riverside Christian grad, just finished a fine collegiate career in track and field, reaching over 39 feet in the triple jump this spring and competing in the Pac-12 championships last month.

Just as Bethany finishes at Oregon State, Jonathan will be joining the Air Force for a dream combination — military service and Division I college baseball.

“I’m so thankful for both opportunities,” he said. “It’s maximizing the best I could hope for.”

Imperial caught the eye of Air Force coaches during the fall of his junior year at a Perfect Game tournament in Florida and the relationship grew quickly. “When a coach asks if you’d be interested in playing baseball and flying jets some day,” he said, “it’s amazing to hear.”

At 6-foot-1, 190 pounds, Imperial has an excellent outfield arm and projects well for power at the collegiate level. He’s rated Washington’s No. 17 prospect for the Class of 2016 by Northwest Baseball. After batting .478 with 30 RBI for Davis this spring, he popped two homers in the Beetles’ opener and was 3 for 3 with a solo blast in the feeder game.

Senator Patty Murray and congressman Dan Newhouse both nominated Imperial for appointment to the Air Force Academy, which is located in Colorado Springs. He will be departing for basic training on July 18 just as the Beetles’ regular season wraps up.

It’s a hectic summer indeed, but Imperial never gave a thought to sitting out the Beetles season to make some time for himself before launching into the next chapter of his life.

“We have a lot of Davis guys (nine) and I wouldn’t want to miss out playing with them,” he said. “I’m excited and thankful for what’s ahead of me this year, but right now it’s just fun to be playing here with me teammates and friends. I’m really excited for All-State because I know some of the guys from Perfect Game events. It will be fun to be on the same field with them.”

With Bethany’s graduation on Saturday, Imperial will only be playing on Sunday. He is one of 18 players on the Team St. Helens roster. An in-depth notebook and full rosters for the four teams will run in Saturday’s edition.