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JAY GAUSE: THE JOURNEY TO YORK...AND

By: Matt Present, WOYK

Toeing the rubber for the Revs for the first time on June 17 – just two days after being signed by the team – Jay Gause had an instinctive feeling about standing tall on a dirt hill, toes digging into clay, gripping a white pearl in his right hand with thousands of fans watching him work.

“I felt like I was home,” he said.



Begun in Shallotte, North Carolina – nearly 500 miles away from York, Pennsylvania – the road to home has been a windy one. But the big right hander has a vision and believes his journey is only beginning.

Gause began pitching at the age of 10, when his family was living in Johnson City, TN. The local league quickly moved him up to play with kids a couple years older.

He quickly blossomed into one of the top pitchers in the state, throwing in the low 90s by the age of 18. He was named a 2010 Rawlings-Perfect Game Honorable Mention All-American and had committed to play his college ball at North Carolina State University. In his senior year at West Brunswick High School, he struck out 98 batters in 53.1 innings and was selected by the Cleveland Indians in the 25th Round of the 2010 MLB Draft.

What seemed like nothing but good news for Gause, however, quickly turned sour. He was declared ineligible to play at N.C. State by the NCAA Clearinghouse, because it did not recognize an online class that he had taken in high school.

Gause instead attended Pitt Community College in Greenville, where he could stay close to home. Then came more bad news. Gause, who had seen his velocity teeter toward the end of his high school season, learned he had suffered a torn labrum and would have to redshirt his freshman year and rehab.

“It was very difficult,” said Gause. “I was in college and didn’t have a car, but I was supposed to go to the rehab facility every day.” Fortunately, his supportive teammate Ryan Kramer lent Gause his car for daily trips to physical therapy. “I would not be where I am today without Ryan Kramer,” Gause said.

Gause defied the odds and returned to the mound for Pitt in 2012, only to find

himself at odds with the head coach and searching again for a school. He settled on Walters State Community College, a highly-regarded program that has seen 61 players drafted by MLB teams – and the home of pitching coach Joey Seaver.

"I wasn't always the hardest worker on the field and Joey knew that," said Gause. "He came to me one time and said 'If you don't want to do this, you can go home.' I knew if I didn't work hard, he was going to give my spot to someone who did. I owe a lot to Joey. He showed me a lot about pitching, and playing the game right. He basically showed me how to be a man. He showed me how to carry myself, and be responsible, and to be your own person."

Gause decided then that he wanted to pitch professionally and told himself that if he did not get drafted in the spring, he would leave school and enter the workforce. Despite going 8-5, with a 3.27 ERA and seven complete games, the call never came. Gause held true to his word, leaving baseball and school behind. He moved out of his dad's house in Shallotte and went to live with his mom in Tennessee, where he held a job working at a restaurant.

It didn't take long before she realized something was missing in his life.

"Jay, you need to go back and play baseball," he recalled her telling him. That left Gause searching for yet

another place to play. This time he turned to Faulkner University, an NAIA school in Montgomery, AL. In 2014, Gause posted a 2.17 ERA, striking out 83, while walking just 24, in 58 innings. His arm was stronger than ever, hitting 98 miles-per-hour on the radar gun and leading the Eagles to their third consecutive NAIA World Series.

A few weeks later, however, it was draft time again, and despite his agent telling him he would go in the first 15 rounds, Gause was preparing himself for disappointment once more.

But this time the call came.

It was the Houston Astros selecting Gause with their 10th round pick. Not long after, Gause made his pro debut, pitching for the Tri-City River Cats, Houston's Low-A affiliate. Unfortunately his arm was still weakened from the Faulkner days, and in nine games for Tri-City, he gave up 14 earned runs in 13.1 innings and struggled to reach the high 80s with his fastball. Gause was released the following spring and thought his renewed dream was gone in a flash.

Out of baseball, Gause went to work in nuclear energy plants across the southeastern United States, trying his hand at scaffolding, pipe fitting, and lead shielding, jobs he had watched his dad work while growing up. At one point he even got his CDL license and went to work driving dump trucks for his cousin's business.

JAY GAUSE: CONTINUED

But once again his mom pushed him back towards baseball. In the middle of last summer he attended a CanAm league tryout, hitting 94 on the radar gun. While he did not get signed, he proved to himself that his arm strength had returned, and he vowed to give it a go the following spring.

Early on in 2017, he received a tip from Quinton McCracken, the director of player development for the Astros, about tryouts in Puerto Rico. Gause decided to give it a shot, and on the very first day throwing was offered a contract by the United Shore Professional Baseball League, where Revs teammate Hawtin Buchanan competed a season ago.



Meanwhile back in York, pitching coach Paul Fletcher was looking to bolster his staff, and he reached out to Justin Orenduff at United Shore, who said of Gause, "This is your guy." After tossing three innings in relief against the Blue Crabs to pick up his first

victory of the season, Gause earned his first start the following week in Bridgeport. Despite not having pitched professionally since 2014, Gause stepped right in, taking a no-hitter into the fifth inning and ultimately giving up just one run on two hits over five frames. The Revs knew they had their guy.

Gause, in fact, has surged past expectations, winning three of his first four decisions, and posting a 2.36 ERA over his first five Atlantic League starts. He has held opponents to a .198 batting average and has struck out 40, while walking 11 in his first 34.1 innings on the mound. He also recorded a team best 11 strikeouts in a win over Sugar Land on July 1.

"To be honest with you I wasn't really sure what to expect," said Fletcher. "I was just hoping for a solid arm, a guy that could come in and eat innings, and we got a lot more than that obviously, and we're really glad he's here."

Gause, however, does not view York as the final destination on his journey.

"I love the Revs, but my goal is to make it to the major leagues," said Gause. "The biggest dream is to make it to the top."

Photos by Joe Doll