

# Press Clippings - July 17, 2023

## – Chicago Tribune –

**From batting cages to the ball field, Josh Colaizzi becomes a breakout star for Bartlett. ‘The kid has that X-factor.’**

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**By Paul Johnson - Aurora Beacon-News**



***Bartlett's Josh Colaizzi (27) slides safely into first base as South Elgin's Jordan Green (7) secures the throw on a pickoff attempt during an Upstate Eight Conference game on Monday, May 15, 2023. (H. Rick Bamman / The Beacon-News)***

Even before his breakout season as a freshman, Bartlett outfielder Josh Colaizzi made a habit of utilizing the Hawks' batting cages to get in some extra work.

One day, Nic Castrovillari and George Betevis wandered over to the cage. And the pair of 2021 Bartlett graduates took notice.

“We walk up and he tells us he’s an incoming freshman, and we were like, ‘What?’” Betevis said. “This kid is grown. This kid is going to be good. He’s so big and physical for his age.

“We weren’t built like that at that age.”

They immediately texted coach Chris Baum to ask if they knew who Colaizzi was. Due to an eye issue, Colaizzi missed camp that summer, so Baum was perplexed.

“I knew all of the incoming freshmen because of camp,” Baum said. “I go, ‘Who is this kid?’ Watching his swing, I knew this kid has got something.”

It’s hard to stay anonymous in the age of social media, but somehow, Colaizzi managed to do it.

After being a unanimous all-conference selection as the Hawks’ leadoff hitter and right fielder, however, he’s not anonymous anymore.

Colaizzi hit .385 with 23 runs, six steals, six doubles, 20 RBIs and a team-high 40 hits as a 14-year-old.

“I didn’t really know if I would have that big of an impact,” Colaizzi said. “I was going to try to make JV, but I had a really good tryout. Coach Baum was like, ‘You’re with me.’

“My first game (against Hoffman Estates) coach said, you’re leading off. It was a lot at once, but I like pressure a lot. It makes me feel like I’m at my best.”

Colaizzi delivered an RBI single that day. By the time the Hawks arrived back home after a spring break trip to Tennessee, it was clear that Baum had something special on his hands.

“When he finally got going, he shot out of a cannon at tryouts,” Baum said. “That’s where Daniel Krulak and Mario Prieto and the seniors were like, ‘Coach, this kid can’t not be on varsity.’

“From there, it blew up. In my 20 years, I don’t know if I’ve seen a freshman jump on the scene that quick.”

Natural ability helps, but Colaizzi has been putting in the work in the weight room for a long time as well. His brother Jake, a 2019 Bartlett graduate, helped get him started.

“A lot of hard work goes into it,” Josh said. “My brother got me into lifting because I saw him getting big. I started, took it from there and got seriously into it.”

The results have shown with a maturity that belies his age.

“His physique, the kid is built like a brick house,” Baum said. “You can tell he’s clearly advanced in his acumen of lifting and his understanding of the importance of the weight room. The kid has a goal and he doesn’t stop.”

Those goals are lofty and continue to push Colaizzi with the Hawks and his travel team, the Rawlings Tigers.

He was recently selected to next month’s invite-only Prep Baseball Report Illinois State Games in Rantoul.

“It’s kind of surreal,” Colaizzi said. “My main goal is to be a college starter at the NCAA Division I level. I want to win conference player of the year, win a state title at Bartlett and be the top-ranked outfielder by Prep Baseball Report.”

After not even knowing who he was a year ago, Baum isn’t going to count out Colaizzi, who figures to play center field and be a big part of the pitching staff next season.

“He’s already looking at the highest levels to go compete at,” Baum said. “From a work-ethic standpoint, the kid has that X-factor that’s needed to get there.

“When coaches look at intangibles, he’s got it more than just about anybody.”

*Paul Johnson is a freelance reporter for The Beacon-News.*