



GUIDE RAIL

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UNHERALDED
DURBIN RIDES HOT START TO
SHOWCASE IMPACTFUL VERSATILITY

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Infielder Caleb Durbin is in his first season at Triple-A and has been one of the top players in the lineup, regardless of where Manager Shelley Duncan puts him on the field.

by Emily Messina

Caleb Durbin has vaulted his name into the conversation as a difference maker and a potential big leaguer down the road. Despite not being on a prospect rankings list or the 40-man roster, Durbin has proven that he provides value and versatility to any lineup.

When Hitting Coach Trevor Amicone was asked preseason what he likes about rising star Caleb Durbin, he responded simply, "Everything."

"Caleb's awesome," Amicone added. "He's fun to work with. He makes a lot of contact. He makes really good swing decisions and has really good at-bats."

Durbin made the Triple-A roster right out of spring training this season. With Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, as of May 1st, he is leading the team in hits (30), doubles (10), runs scored (20) and runs batted in (22). He is also first with 22 walks and 12 stolen bases. Durbin is batting .294 in 27 games played, the most out of any RailRider. The 24-year-old also leads the Yankees farm system in most of these hitting categories as well.

Manager Shelley Duncan has Durbin consistently batting near the top of the lineup, if not in the leadoff spot. This has worked out well for Caleb who began the season with a 12-game on-base streak including getting aboard in ten consecutive plate appearances, tying a franchise record set in 1995 by Rob Butler of the Red Barons. Durbin says he is used to being at the top of the order and likes being able to relay back information to his teammates.

"It's awesome. I like being one of the table setters up top you know," he said. "I'm used to trying to grind out at-bats and trying to see a lot of pitches for my teammates."



Just as Durbin is accomplished at the plate, he has also made an impact in the field. For SWB, he has appeared at second base, shortstop and third base in the infield as well as both left and center in the outfield. He can mainly be found as a middle infielder, making the majority of his starts at second. Durbin has recorded only three errors this season, coming at short and third. He has also assisted in 14 double plays, helping his team rank in the top ten in that category in Triple-A baseball.

Durbin explained that sticking to his routine has helped him get comfortable quickly at the new level. He understands there is always ebb and flow of the game, but the more you keep your preparation consistent the more you can get the good results to come more often. Caleb said that this mindset helped him settle in and allowed him to concentrate on competing every single day.



An interesting adjustment that Durbin has made to his game is his focus on approaching and tackling pitchers in a more specific way.

“I think it’s that our other infielders here have experience at the big league level and I get to watch the way they go about scouting the pitchers,” Durbin explained about a difference he has seen thus far. “The way they talk about how to attack pitchers is kind of next level. It’s something I haven’t even really seen in pro ball yet, so just kind of getting that first glimpse of the way, you know, big leaguers try to think about how they’re attacking pitchers is definitely next level.”

Durbin began his professional baseball career when his name was called in the 14th round of the 2021 Draft by the Atlanta Braves. He played just two seasons in their affiliates before being traded along with RHP Indigo Diaz to the New York Yankees for LHP Lucas Luetge on December 28, 2022. While Diaz is on the 60-Day Injured List this season, Luetge is playing with the Triple-A Red Sox after struggling with the Braves last summer.

In 2023, Durbin split time between Hudson Valley and Somerset with double the games coming in Double-A. In 69 total contests, he hit .304 with 77 hits, including 17 doubles. Unsurprisingly, he stole 36 bases, upping his run game from the previous season. However, Durbin was on and off the injured list from June to the end of the season. He was ultimately named a Minor League Baseball Organization All-Star despite his ankle injury limiting his time.

The Yankees chose to send him to the prized Arizona Fall League, where top prospects face



the best of the best young talent in the game. Durbin shined at the dish for the Mesa Solar Sox hitting .353. In 23 games, he notched 30 hits including 13 for extra bases. However, he was most heralded for his work on the basepaths stealing 21 times and getting caught just twice. Durbin became just the fourth player in the AFL to rack up 20 stolen bases in a season and the first since 2008. He ended just three shy of Rick Holifield's record of 24 set back in the inaugural campaign of 1994.

Durbin recognizes that his speed is a plus skill for him and some of the new rules can play into that for him. He also noted that there were not always full scouting reports available in the fall league, so he had to work to pick up information on the fly which has helped him tremendously at the start of his Triple-A career.

"It was a lot of picking up things as you're going, so mid-game, you know, and

sometimes it's no different here," Durbin detailed. "A new pitcher comes in and you kind of have to pick him apart on the fly, so being able to practice that in the fall definitely helps me here."

After 2023 was fully wrapped, Caleb received a non-roster invite to big league spring training. He was one of just ten players included who had not accrued any Major League service time. He said it was a great opportunity to build relationships with guys who have that experience.

Durbin continued to prove he deserved to be there by hammering ten hits in 15 games. He batted .313 with five RBIs, including his first preseason home run. Durbin only struck out four times to his pair of walks and, of course, stole three bags.

Yankees Manager Aaron Boone raved about Durbin's talent.

"He's gonna have a big league career. He can really hit. He can run and is a great baserunner. Steals bases. Has some position flexibility. But I think he's gonna be a player for a long time. I feel like he's a winning player." Aaron Boone said to the New York Daily News during Spring Training.

This recognition helped him get the nod onto the roster for the first-ever Spring Breakout game where the Yankees top prospects competed against the Blue Jays best up-and-comers. The "Baby Bombers" took the contest 9-1 thanks to a great game from Durbin and #2 prospect Spencer Jones. Durbin went 2-for-3 with a run scored and one batted in.



Because of early success, fans in Moosic can see Durbin help the RailRiders to a winning season at PNC Field. Amicone described the adjustments that Durbin has made to get to the minor's highest level.

“When he got to the Yankees organization, our hitting coaches in the levels below this one worked with him and not only did he swing and miss less last year than he had previously in his career, but he also doubled the rate of hard contact that he made,” Amicone said. “And, that's something that a lot of people don't think you can do. It's something that we have a track record of being able to see guys do, which is lower their swing and miss and hit for more power at the same time.”

It is a big jump from where Durbin started out at Washington University in St. Louis. He played three seasons as a part of their Division III program, recording a .386 batting average with 141 hits in 93 games. He only struck out ten times compared to his 42 career walks. In 2021, he helped the team make it deep to game ten in the College World Series.

Only two other players have ever been drafted from WashU, Russ Chambliss and John Herzing, neither of which made it to the MLB. Durbin plays in the minors with one other athlete from the Bears, Ryan Loutos, who signed with the St. Louis Cardinals in 2021 as well. Loutos is a righthanded reliever also in Triple-A with the Memphis Redbirds.

Durbin has tackled every challenge given to him and has climbed to the top level of the Yankees affiliates.

“Whether we see him at some point this year, I don't know,” Boone divulged.” But I do feel like he's got a bright, big league future.”

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