

DANIEL NAVA



If At First You Don't Succeed...

BY KIRK BARRON

As an undersized No. 9 hitter in high school, Chico Outlaws outfielder Daniel Nava took a chance by walking on at Santa Clara University. Daniel figured it was his best shot at playing Division I baseball since because he knew Broncos' Head Coach Mark O'Brien from playing high school baseball at nearby St. Francis High School. But the diminutive (Nava says he was about 5-foot-5-inches 150 pounds out of high school) and light-hitting outfielder wasn't quite ready to compete in a big-time college program.

But instead of giving up, Nava swallowed his pride and stuck around, serving as Santa Clara's team manager...and all the while vigorously hitting the weights. As he hit his growth spurt and began seeing the results from lifting, Daniel's money began to run out and he decided to give junior college ball a shot at the College of San Mateo. The decision paid off as Nava was a California J-C All-American in his first season and was named to the All-State team his second year. Thanks to his tireless work in the gym and growing almost five inches, Daniel slammed 11 home runs in two years of junior college ball after hitting just one home run his entire high school career.

After he finished dominating the junior college ranks, Daniel went back to Santa Clara. At the first team meeting he sat in back and when all the players introduced themselves, it came as somewhat of a shock to some of the older players who knew Daniel from his team manager days. After a slow start, Nava went on a tear to finish the 2006 season with a team-leading .395 batting average with 4 triples and 3 home runs. He was also a perfect 15-for-15 on the base paths and didn't make an error in the field.

With such a solid year, Nava hoped to attract a major league club's interest, but went undrafted...and though he held out hope to be signed as a free agent by a big league club, it never happened. In June of last year he and fellow Bronco Jason Matteucci were invited to Chico to work out for Mark Parent in hopes of earning an Outlaws roster spot. Once again Nava came up just a little short, as Matteucci ended up getting the job. This year Daniel was back in Chico competing to make the club, but as a non-roster invitee. This time he impressed Mark Parent so much that Nava not only made the team, but he found himself

Continued on next page



batting in the cleanup spot on opening day. He provided all the Outlaws long-ball power during the first week of the season, bashing the team's only two home runs during that seven-game stretch.

Unlike a lot of baseball players, Nava doesn't focus on the statistics; he doesn't know what his season stats are and doesn't really care. "My goal is just to hit the ball hard, and as long as my mind and approach are good, I'm happy," Daniel says. "I'd rather drive a ball to the 405 sign for an out than hit a little Texas Leaguer for a hit."



While he would like to sign with a Major League organization, Nava is enjoying his time with the Outlaws. In affiliated ball players are more individuals since they are being called up and sent down all the time, but, Daniel says, with the Outlaws it really feels like a team. "I enjoy this team atmosphere, the guys are awesome and we have so much fun together," he said.



The fan support has made playing in the heat easier for the Redwood City, California native. After a teammate hit a two-run double off the wall, Daniel said, he took a step out of the dugout, looked up at the Nettleton Stadium crowd and shook his head about the enthusiasm he saw exhibited by the team's fans and boosters. It's just one more thing to motivate Nava to continue his growth as a player and person...and, at least for now, the Outlaws are reaping the benefits.