



**Kim steps up
for the Oakland A's**

EDDIE KIM ('03) LEADS EIGHT DIAMOND DUKES RELISHING IN THE MINOR LEAGUES. Facing their first "real" jobs, many 2003 JMU graduates walked into vast office buildings, while Eddie Kim ('03), stepped up to the plate -- literally. Along with seven of his Diamond Dukes teammates, Kim joined the ranks of thousands before him to take a crack at making it big in the minor leagues of professional baseball.

By Kyra Papafil ('04)

Kim says he never imagined that he would one day graduate from JMU and be drafted by Major League Baseball's Oakland Athletics.

"I never even picked up a baseball until I was 9 or 10 years old," says the 6-foot, 3-inch Kim, the first player in the 18-year history of Colonial Athletic Association baseball to earn Player of the Year honors twice. "My parents wanted me to try different things, so I began playing baseball. Once I picked up a ball, I knew baseball was going to be the sport."

Kim, 22, was selected by the Athletics in the fourth round of the 2003 First-Year Player Draft. He signed his professional contract June 9.

In his rookie season for Oakland's Vancouver Canadians in the Class A Northwest League, Kim played in 64 games and batted .305. The switch-hitter stepped to the plate 233 times and had 71 hits, four home runs, 17 doubles, 38 RBIs and one stolen base. Only six of his 41 teammates had better batting averages.

Kim says that it is wonderful to play in Vancouver. Located in the southwest corner of Canada in the province of British Columbia, Vancouver is

surrounded by water on three sides. Overlooked by the Coast Range, mountains that rise abruptly to more than 1,500 meters, Vancouver's population is about 33 percent Asian. With about 600,000 residents, Vancouver lies in a region of more than two million people and is the third largest city in Canada. A major tourist destination, the city boasts 180 parks, including the world-famous Stanley Park, and one of the mildest climates in Canada.

Kim agrees that the city is a great place to start a career doing what he loves. And though he's only looking forward to proving himself in the minors, a long list of JMU honors helped the Athletics organization choose Kim. The Fairfax native was named the Diamond Dukes Player of the Year three years in a row and the Division I State Player of the Year by the Virginia Sports Information Directors.

"He's not a one-year wonder," says Diamond Dukes coach Spanky McFarland. "He had three solid years for JMU."

In his final season as a Duke, Kim hit .412, with a career-high 17 home runs, and led the CAA with 67 RBIs. He tied the school record of 36 home runs and ended his college career with another record -- a .409 career batting average, wiping out a .388 average previously set by Billy Sample ('76). He won both the JMU Billy Sample MVP Award and the Rod Boddie Hitting Award.

Kim says, though, that professional baseball was not always a sure thing. "I barely played my freshman year, so pro ball was completely out of my mind," he admits.

McFarland says, "After not being drafted following his junior year, instead of being down, Eddie put his efforts into becoming a better player, and that really showed the kind of person he is."

With a successful rookie season with the Vancouver Canadians, Kim has shown his production does not only thrive in Harrisonburg. "I was just blessed with the whole situation," Kim says.

Proving his extreme dedication to his sport, Kim returned to campus in early 2004 to get in some extra training and conditioning before heading to the Oakland A's spring training camp. Kim worked with JMU strength coach Greg Werner, who also trains with JMU gridiron stand-outs New York Giant Delvin Joyce ('00) and New Orleans Saint Curtis Keaton ('00).

The Eddie Kim File:

Born April 16, 1981

Parents: Jin and Dong Ho Kim

Kinesiology major with a concentration in sport management

2003 stats:

Colonial Athletic Association Player of the Year

Third-team All-America by Collegiate Baseball

First-team All-CAA, All-State and All-East

CAA leader in hits, total bases and RBI

Ranked second in the league in batting average and on-base percentage (.500),

Ranked third in slugging percentage (.685) and fourth in home runs

Led the Dukes with 30 multiple-hit games

Ranked 17th nationally in batting average

Set JMU season records for games played, total bases (161) and putouts (531)

More 2003 Diamond Dukes in the majors

A credit to Spanky McFarland's baseball program, Kim was not alone in leaving Harrisonburg behind for the big show.

The Toronto Blue Jays picked up Kurt Isenberg, a junior southpaw from Virginia Beach. Senior right-handed pitcher Rick McKernan ('03) of Newport News was signed as a free agent by the Baltimore Orioles. Catcher Matt Deuchler ('03) was chosen in the 40th round by the Chicago White Sox. Shortstop Nathan Doyle ('03) joined the Detroit Tigers in the 25th round.

Infielder Brent Metheny ('03) signed with the Seattle Mariners, and pitcher Mike Trussell ('03) has signed with Baton Rouge River Bats, an independent professional team, according to McFarland.

"For more than four years, we were 29th in the country when these guys played," McFarland says. "Out of 287 Division I teams, that wasn't too bad."

The Diamond Dukes broke the number of wins during a single season record two seasons ago with 44, while most of these players were juniors, with the exception of Isenberg being a sophomore. McFarland also says this is the most players JMU has ever had sign with major league teams in one year.

JMU has had players move on to play major league baseball after each of the last 27 seasons. McFarland says, "We're going to be very young this spring. We have a 28-man roster, and 26 are freshmen and sophomores."

The last starting lineup left big shoes to fill, but McFarland has faith in his new team. "The good thing is that the [players] leaving set the standard for these guys. This new group is very talented, and that's why they came here," McFarland says.