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Mercury News baseball player of the year: St. Francis' Michael Strem 'did it all'

By Darren Sabedra dsabedra@mercurynews.com Posted: 06/26/2013 03:30:37 PM PDT Updated: 06/26/2013 03:30:39 PM PDT

No one in the Mercury News coverage area did more for his baseball team this season than Michael Strem. The St. Francis standout dominated on the mound, played solid defense as an infielder and was one of the area's most productive hitters.

His team also won.

With Strem recording two victories during the Lancers' playoff run, including the first perfect game in school history, St. Francis won a section title for the first time since 2001. For this, the Boston College-bound Strem is the Mercury News baseball player of the year.

"Michael was the heart and soul of our team," St. Francis coach Mike Oakland said. "What's great about him is he was able to maintain a high level of consistency all year."

Strem, a finalist for Cal-Hi Sports' state player of the year, went 11-1 with a 1.30 ERA, striking out 79 and walking only 16. He hit .417 (45 for 108) with 22 RBIs and 29 runs.

On days he didn't pitch, Strem played second base and third base. "He did it all -- he hit, he pitched, he played great defense," said Palo Alto coach Erick Raich, whose team lost to St. Francis twice this season. "He's very smart."

Strem's biggest individual moment came in the opening round of the Central Coast Section Division I playoffs against Monta Vista. St. Francis entered the playoffs with losses in three of its previous four games and had encountered plenty of postseason disappointment since winning a CCS title in 2001, including four opening-round defeats.

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St. Francis High School's starting pitcher Michael Strem (10) high-fives St.... (Nhat V. Meyer)

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Determined to help St. Francis end its playoff rut, Strem took a perfect game into the sixth inning against 16th-seeded Monta Vista. But top-seeded St. Francis was still locked in a scoreless tie. "We needed every bit of that perfect game," Oakland said.

St. Francis scored two in the bottom of the sixth, and Strem completed his 66-pitch perfect game in the seventh. He struck out eight of the 21 batters he faced.

"Personally, the perfect game is something that I will never forget for the rest of my life as it is incredibly rare to do," Strem said last weekend in an email interview while vacationing in Europe. "Even though that was special for me, I will most remember all of my teammates and coaches and the amazing season that we had together during my senior year, ultimately resulting in the championship."

Strem had a one-out save in St. Francis' 3-0 quarterfinal win over Valley Christian and was the winning pitcher, had three hits and drove in five runs in an 8-3 semifinal victory over Palo Alto. When the Lancers capped their 29-4 season with a 10-0, six-inning win over Serra in the final, Strem had two hits and scored twice.

"It was an incredibly exciting and gratifying feeling to be able to win a CCS Division 1 title for our program as well as for our school," Strem said.

All-Mercury News Baseball

FIRST TEAM

Stevie Berman, C/P, Saratoga, senior SCVAL De Anza MVP hit .474 with 10 homers, 34 RBIs and 31 runs. The Santa Clara-bound Berman also had four saves.

Justin Calomeni, P/IF/OF, Bellarmine, senior In his final three starts, Calomeni pitched 23 scoreless innings, shutting out St. Francis twice and throwing nine scoreless innings in a CCS win over Fremont. He went 8-1 with a 1.07 ERA.

Lucas Erceg, IF/P, Westmont, senior

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Senior of year in BVAL Mt. Hamilton Division went 9-3 with a 0.59 ERA. He struck out 106 in 83 innings. He also hit .437 with 22 RBIs.
 Armando Fajardo, IF, Hillsdale, senior
 PAL Bay MVP drove in 39 runs while hitting .458 with 19 extra-base hits, including eight home runs
 John Gavin, P, St. Francis, junior
 He went 11-1 with a 1.28 ERA to help St. Francis win the CCS Division I title. In the CCS final against Serra, Gavin allowed one hit, struck out eight and walked two as St. Francis won 10-0 in six innings.
 JD Hearn, IF, Westmont, senior
 BVAL Mt. Hamilton MVP hit .460 with 20 extra-base hits, including 15 doubles, as his team won the division championship.
 Theron Kay, P/DH, Valley Christian, junior
 He went 10-3 with a 0.93 ERA for a team that reached the CCS quarterfinals. He struck out 82 and walked only 18 in 901/3 innings.
 Jordan Paroubeck, OF, Serra, senior
 WCAL MVP hit .402 with 22 extra-base hits, including seven home runs, and was drafted by the Padres with the 69th pick in the draft.
 John Riley, C/P, Willow Glen, senior
 Riley capped a superb high school career with three home runs in the playoffs to help Willow Glen win its first CCS title in 46 years. Drafted by the Giants and signed by Cal, Riley hit .337 this season with eight homers.
 Michael Strem, P/IF, St. Francis, senior
 The Mercury News player of the year went 11-1 with a 1.30 ERA and hit .417 with 22 RBIs for the CCS Division I champions.

Second team

Brett Berghammer, OF/P, Half Moon Bay, junior
 Justin Bruce, P/IF, Willow Glen, senior
 Tommy Caulfield, P, Burlingame, senior
 Isaac Feldstein, DH, Palo Alto, senior
 Sam Fontaine, P, Bellarmine, senior
 Zach Fox, P, Los Gatos, senior
 Grant Goodman, IF/P, Burlingame, senior
 Austin Guibor, OF, St. Francis, senior
 Matt Krook, P/IF, St. Ignatius, senior
 Michael Tinsley, C, Serra, senior

Honorable mention

Erik Amundson, Menlo-Atherton; Chris Baker, St. Francis; Garrett Ciuk, Wilcox; Christian Conci, Serra; Drew Cooper, Branham; Kenny Corey, Willow Glen; Brad Degnan, Woodside; Sam Delaplane, Leigh; Kyle Dozier, Saratoga; Kendall Eng, Branham; Spencer Erdman, Archbishop Mitty; John Forestieri, Live Oak; Tyler Higgins, Gunderson; Will Lighthouse, Prospect; Andrew Mallon, Bellarmine; Austin Marcus, Menlo; Jacob Martinez, Terra Nova; Mickey McDonald, Serra; Matt McLaughlin, Leland; Nick Mello, Leigh; Hector Montes, Overfelt; Paul Murray, Serra; John Nashed, Leland; Austin Poore, Palo Alto; Brett Rasso, Sacred Heart Cathedral; Jack Redman, Menlo; Jeider Rincon, Overfelt; Stephen Ruff, Saratoga; Matt Seubert, Carmont; Hunter Simmons, St. Francis; Peter Stern, Monta Vista; Drew Strotman, Homestead; Matt Toscano, Willow Glen; Kyle Vallans, Mills; Tyler VauDell, Sacred Heart Prep; Ryan Williams, Branham

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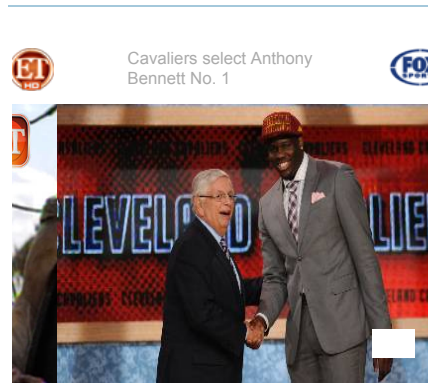
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