

“Grit is passion and perseverance for long-term and meaningful goals. To be gritty is to keep putting one foot in front of the other. To be gritty is to hold fast to an interesting and purposeful goal. To be gritty is to invest, day after week after year, in challenging practice. To be gritty is to fall down seven times, and rise eight.” Angela Lee Duckworth

The Athlete of the Month for November 2018 is the personification of grit. Mike Gervasi entered Archbishop Williams High School from Rockland, MA, 4 years ago and tried out for baseball that spring. I had just been hired as the freshman baseball coach, as a new coaching staff took over the baseball program. It was evident within 1 week that we had a strong leader, as Mike, who clearly had JV talent, was told that he would be staying with the freshman because we needed a catcher at that level. Although disappointed, Mike never complained. He was asked to lead the team on and off the field. Mike caught almost every inning for that team, batted third and dominated the competition. Most importantly, he used his frustration and the constructive criticism in a positive way and became one of the hardest working, passionate players we've ever seen.

Mike began a lifting program and committed to working harder. In Sophomore year he jumped over the JV team and started for the varsity in right field. The Bishops had a Senior who was the Division 4 Boston Globe Player of the Year playing catcher at that time, former Athlete of the Month, Casey Earle. Mike had a solid season and helped the Bishops to the Division 4 State Championship game, where they would lose 5-3. The loss made a hungry man, hungrier. Mike began playing more baseball with the Boston Prospects over the summer months and frequenting the Braintree Baseball Club as a regular. If you've been in the club, you've seen Mike Gervasi relentlessly working in the cages or catching bullpens whenever asked. Mike made it his mission to get better and help the Bishops win a State Title and to attract an offer to play college baseball.

The 2018 high school baseball season saw Mike make his mark, as he would help lead the Bishops back to the State Title game where Archies would win their first State championship since 1995. He batted .327 with 27 hits in 27 games and drove in 17 runs. He was chosen to the Catholic Central League all-conference team. Head Varsity baseball Coach, Jim Dolan stated about Mike, “All you need to know about Mike Gervasi is that he could barely move during the tournament (7 games) due to a pulled back muscle, but he would not come out; the team needed him. He's a team-first guy and has been a big part of our success at Archbishop Williams, splitting time between catching and playing right field. He would do whatever it takes to help his team win. I have been so blessed to coach him and can't wait to see what this year brings.”

Mike has spent the last 6 months since that title game working out religiously and playing in front of college coaches looking for an opportunity to play at the collegiate level. This past month, Mike received that offer and achieved a goal that many believed was not possible; an offer to play for a Division 2 powerhouse, Franklin Pierce University. Mike has heard the word “No” many times in the last 4 years. Instead of wallowing in self-pity, Mike has taken those disappointments and continued to work even harder, take advice, criticism and instruction and continue to humbly hone his craft and help lead his high school baseball team to heights not seen in 20+ years. Most importantly, Mike has been a role model to baseball club players displaying what hard work, grit and humility really look like. I am grateful to have crossed his path and watched from the front row. Thank you for being a shining example for all of us and good luck this coming season and in your future college years.

Bill Berman