

The Free Press



Wednesday,  
May 30, 2007

www.mankatofreepress.com

# Sports

## MSU's Bjelland signs with Diamondbacks

### Standout lefty to join Arizona's extended spring training today

By Chad Courrier  
Free Press Staff Writer

**MANKATO** — Jon Bjelland could have waited until June 7-8 and hope to get lucky in the Major League Baseball draft. But as a fifth-year senior, the Minnesota State left-hander was eligible to sign with any team as soon as his season finished.

So Bjelland is now a member of the Arizona Diamondbacks.

"Being an older guy, I had an opportunity to sign before the draft if teams were interested," he said. "A couple of other teams made offers, but I decided Arizona was a good fit for me. Some (organizations) wanted to put me in the bullpen. Arizona wants to give



Jon Bjelland, a fifth-year senior at Minnesota State, has signed a one-year deal with Arizona.

me a few starts and see how it goes."

Earlier this month, Bjelland finished his career at Minnesota State, posting a 22-1 record and 2.26 earned-run

average in three seasons and receiving All-America honors from two organizations. Last season, he set a school record for victories, going 11-0 with a 2.17 ERA and ranking third in Division II with 12.1 strikeouts per nine innings.

"He's really become a lot tougher mentally," Minnesota State coach Dean Bowyer said. "You look at his record and he's only lost one game, it's incredible. His control has really improved, and he's mastered more pitches. He made a

big jump, even from last year."

Bjelland flies to Tucson, Ariz., today and will join the Diamondbacks' extended spring training, though he's not sure what his role will be. After the draft, the Diamondbacks hold a mini-camp June 12-16, then start assigning players to affiliates in Missoula, Mont., or Yakima, Wash.

If he were to catch somebody's eye before the draft, he could be moved to the Class A affiliate in South Bend, Ind.

"They get to see him before they see the kids they draft," Bowyer said. "It would be good for him to go to a team that's already playing."

Bjelland signed a one-year contract with the Diamondbacks so his future is far from certain. But so far, things are going pretty well.

"Growing up, it's every kid's dream (to play professional baseball)," Bjelland said. "I never imagined it would come true, and now it has. I don't know if it's really set in yet."