

Konnor Griffin Makes His Mark on Professional Baseball

By Max Tanzer

Less than 12 months ago, Konnor Griffin was chasing a state championship for Jackson Prep High School, a short drive away from his hometown of Florence, Mississippi. After being selected by the Pittsburgh Pirates ninth overall in the 2024 draft, he has quickly added to an already promising reputation for fans and evaluators around the baseball world.

Griffin's 2025 season began with an experience of a lifetime - one that he had been working for his entire life. Despite having not made his professional debut, the then 18-year-old appeared in eight big league Spring Training games for the Pirates.

Through the month of March, he launched an opposite-field homer and made a spectacular diving catch in centerfield, providing a sneak-preview of what's to come in front of Major League staff and players.

For Griffin, the opportunity to share the dugout with men of that stature represented a dream come true.

"Getting to be around the big leaguers at big league camp was wonderful," Griffin said. "Going into these pro games, I feel more prepared than I ever have. All of the knowledge that I've been blessed with over this Spring Training has been wonderful and it started at big league camp."

Working with one of the Pittsburgh's most beloved and longest-tenured players was a highlight for Griffin during the spring.

"Everybody loves Andrew McCutchen, so I loved getting to chat with him," he remembered. "It was funny, we were talking about how his first big league camp was in 2006, and that's when I was born, so that was pretty cool."

He also mentioned Isaiah Kiner-Falefa as someone who helped him with 'his shortstop game' and Henry Davis who worked with him on building pre-game routines that could help over the long season.

"I had so many great guys, they just really took me under their wing, and we had a good time," he added.

After Spring Training, Griffin broke camp with Single-A Bradenton, marking his first official assignment with a Pirates affiliate. On April 4, Griffin and the Marauders traveled across the state of Florida to open the season at Jackie Robinson Ballpark in Daytona for Opening Day.

On a sun-bathed Friday night, Griffin strode to the plate to lead off the season for Bradenton. Wearing the Marauders black and gold jersey, reminiscent of the colors he will dawn at the big league level one day, Griffin jumped on a first pitch fastball and seared a screaming liner to left field for a single and his first professional hit.

After advancing to second on a ground out, Griffin promptly stole third base, highlighting the multi-faceted power-speed combination that he would continue to wreak havoc with over his first months in professional baseball.

“I didn’t know what to expect,” he said reflecting on his debut. “Daytona brought a great crowd. Taking the field was awesome. I have a great group of guys with me. It’s a wonderful team with great coaches.”

Ultimately, Griffin’s aggressive first inning of play was a microcosm for what Marauders fans would enjoy over his first two months with the team.

Through the Marauders first 44 games, Griffin led the team in average (.309), hits (50), stolen bases (18) and was tied for the Florida State League lead with eight home runs.

In May, Griffin provided a dominant stretch for Bradenton, hitting safely in nine consecutive games where he recorded 21 hits in 40 at-bats, good for an unfathomable .525 average over the two-week stretch.

Much of that production for Griffin came versus arms who were years older with college experience. That list included top Toronto Blue Jays prospect Trey Yesavage, who entered his May 13 start versus the Marauders having allowed one home run and just 15 hits over 28.1 innings of work.

Fittingly, Griffin stepped to the plate against the former first-round pick and powered the first pitch of the game over the visitors’ bullpen and off the facing of the ballpark’s deepest confines for a lead-off round tripper.

“It was a good battle facing Trey, really good arm. I’ve never seen that level of pitching,” he noted when reflecting on his first night facing the former college arm. “He left a heater up, and I was able to do some damage, which was pretty cool. It’s a fun battle. That’s the type of game I would want to go see if I was a fan.”

Not only has Griffin’s ability to settle in turned heads, but his coachability, maturity and commitment to his craft have impressed. Marauders hitting coach Quentin Brown lauded his hard-working nature at such a young age.

“He’s a super coachable guy and always wants to learn,” Brown said. “Nobody has any clue about the work he puts in.”

Brown used his homer off Yesavage as a prime example.

“He hits the first pitch off an elite fastball,” he remembered. “Yesavage is legit. To be able to hit that pitch, something we’ve been really working on in the cages, fans just see the home run and are happy but have zero clue the work that that man has put to be able to get to a pitch like that. “

Not only has Griffin been putting the work in off the field, but he also exhibits characteristics of a team leader and ambassador for his organization. He often is the first one out of the Marauders dugout to greet his teammates after scoring, always hustles and is routinely the last to leave the diamond.

After games, Griffin has made the small crescent in the protective netting up first base line at LECOM Park home, signing autographs to ensure every young fan leaves with a souvenir.

While the speed, exit velocities and his sensational defense in both centerfield and at shortstop stand out at first glance, his character on and off the diamond may be the most powerful quality about his game.

“I just want to make a positive impact on everybody around me, whether that’s through social media or kids showing up to games,” he said. “I remember being that little kid just wanting to be a great baseball player too.”