

International call for Bristol pitcher

A BRISTOL teenager is set to make a trip to America this summer after receiving a call up for the Great Britain Junior baseball squad.

QEH pupil Luke Looney, 16, will join up with the 18-man squad this weekend to compete in a pre-season tournament in Essex as the youngsters begin preparations to contest the a USSSA Gold Medal Games in Florida later this year.

It will be the Long Ashton youngster's second year as part of the squad after a number of impressive performances pitching for the Bristol Badgers initiated a call up for the European Championship tournament in Austria last summer.

"Luke has come on in leaps and bounds over the last 12 months," said GB Junior team head coach Will Lintern.

"I first saw him play just over a year ago and what I first noticed was his tremendous athleticism.

"He is a very effective pitcher and has carved out a very useful niche for himself after doing a lot of work on changing the angles of his arm before and during delivery.

"This has given Luke a very deceptive style and he has also become a very reliable fielder, so he is a key member of our squad."

The GB squad will face competition from the likes of USA, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Canada, France and Italy when they go across the Atlantic, and Looney will hope to press his claims for inclusion in the senior squad at some time in the future.

"We act as a stepping stone to the senior squad," Lintern added. "A good number of youngsters have made the transition in recent years."

Looney will also play an integral role in helping the Badgers in their bid to land the British AAA Southern League title when their season begins later this month.

"It's a great achievement for Luke," added dad Daniel.

"He's only been playing baseball for around 18 months, but quickly showed he had a natural ability for the game.

"Luke is a keen cricketer and I think the fact that he has been playing from a very young age has helped him because a lot of the skills are transferable."

Looney has been joined at the Great Britain Academy sessions by another young hopeful



Power: Luke Looney in action for Badgers

Baseball

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from the Badgers after Portishead teenager Miles Sampson received an invite to participate in advanced training.

"It's great news for the club," said Badgers chairman Remmert Schouten.

"We're pleased for Luke as this is his second year with GB. We hope some of the other young players from our club will also join Luke and Miles in playing for GB in the future."

The Badgers are still looking for players to join the Patchway-based club and have begun outdoor training sessions ahead of the new campaign. Players of all abilities are welcome. Details of how to register an interest in joining the club can be found at: www.bristolbaseball.co.uk