

University of Iowa baseball coach Rick Heller was watching Monday when Hunter Lee pitched for the Kirkwood Eagles.

Lee got off to a good start when he struck out two batters in the first inning on a chilly day. Then he struck out the side in the second inning, giving him five K's in two frames.

Heller and Iowa pitching coach Desi Druschel were impressed.

Lee struck out two more batters in the third inning, fanned two more in the fourth and struck out the lead-off batter in the fifth inning, giving him 10 K's in 4 1/3 innings.

Things went downhill for Lee after that, but he got the victory and had shown Heller more than enough. Lee took an official visit to Iowa on Tuesday and accepted an offer to pitch for the Hawks next season.

"I'm feeling really good," he said Thursday after practice at Kirkwood. "I'm an Iowa kid through and through.

"I've grown up a lot around Iowa baseball and football, I've been to Iowa City a lot growing up. It's kind of a dream come true. I can't wait to be a part of it."

Lee is a 6-foot-1 right-hander from Des Moines Lincoln who's described as a "bulldog" on the mound. He's got a fastball that reaches the low 90's and also throws a change-up, curveball and slider.

Lee has a 4-0 record and 4.09 ERA for the seventh-ranked Kirkwood Eagles this season. He

was 4-3 with a 3.38 ERA last year and is an important member of an excellent pitching staff.

The Eagles have developed a pipeline with Heller and the Iowa Hawkeyes. Korry Howell, their starting shortstop, has signed with the Hawks. And Lorenzo Elion, the starting third baseball at Kirkwood last year, is currently with the Hawkeyes and had two RBIs in a victory there Wednesday.

"If Korry goes in the draft good for him, but we could have a Kirkwood trio down there," said Lee. "That's exciting to be a part of that."

Howell was drafted in the 19th round by Kansas City last year but returned to Kirkwood this season as a sophomore.

Lee experienced minor arm problems last season. He felt fine when he pitched, but would not recover in a proper time-frame.

There was no structural damage, according to an MRI, but Lee rested during the summer and began an extensive throwing program in the fall to get ready for this season. He was ready for the opening series in mid-February and said he feels 100 percent, although he's working toward a higher pitch count.

He was relieved to pitch against Johnson County in the opening series of the campaign.

"It's been a long process, but it was good to finally get out there and throw a few strikes and perform and get it done," he said.