

Bishop State finds new home at Hank Aaron Stadium

By Press-Register Correspondent

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After a 10-29 finish in 2009, Bishop State baseball coach Mark Johnston hopes for better things in 2010.

"We didn't win a ton of ballgames last year, but we had some improvement over the year before," he said. "Last year we wound up finishing the season with 15 guys, but this year we're starting off with 30."

In addition, the Wildcats are playing their home games at Hank Aaron Stadium. Johnston said it was a big plus for the program.

"The city of Mobile got together, along with (Bishop State president) Dr. James Lowe and (athletic director) Tim Broughton," he said. "I'm real happy, and I'm looking forward to it."

A challenging early schedule awaits the Wildcats with 14 games in February. In addition, several out-of-state teams dot the schedule.

"We expanded the schedule in the hope it will make us more game-savvy," Johnston said. "Hopefully, it'll prepare us for conference play."

Pitching will be the Wildcats' strength behind returning ace Josh Blaylock. In addition, brothers Justin Lee and Brett Lee will be expected to contribute. Brett Lee, a left-hander, was drafted last year by the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Other pitchers expected to contribute are Julius Bridges, along with Dustin Pugh and Casey Adams, both of whom enter the season recovering from injuries.

Besides being a threat on the mound, Blaylock also hit .400 last season. Will Ratcliff had a good year with the bat last year, finishing just under .300 before an injury cut his season short. In addition, Bishop State returns Chris Smith, who also batted .300 last year.

Several Mobile-area players will make the roster, including McGill-Toolen standout Chase Freeman and left-hander Kevin Davis of Alma Bryant as well as several players from Florida, including infielders Chris Ambrosio and Tommy Dwyer.

"We have more choices and more arms to put out there," Johnston said. "I think we have a good enough team to compete this season."

Bishop State opens the season Friday at Lawson State.

Here is Bishop State's 2010 baseball schedule. All home games are at Hank Aaron Stadium.

FEBRUARY: 5 at Lawson State (DH); 6 at Selma University JV (DH); 9 at Jones CC (DH); 14 at Baton Rouge CC (DH); 20 at Marion (DH); 26 vs. East Mississippi (DH), 12 noon; 27 at Selma.

MARCH: 2 vs Marion (DH), 12 noon; 5 at Wallace-Dothan; 6 at Wallace-Dothan; 8 vs Mineral Area College, MO. (DH), 12 noon; 10 vs Hibbing, Minn.(DH), 12 noon; 12 vs Central Alabama, 1 p.m.; 13 vs Central Alabama (DH), 12 noon; 16 vs. Jeff State (DH), 12 noon; 19 at Southern Union; 20 at Southern Union (DH); 26 vs. Faulkner (DH), 12 noon; 27 vs. Faulkner (DH), 12 noon.

APRIL: 1 at Enterprise; 3 at Enterprise (DH); 9 at Chattahoochee Valley; 10 at Chattahoochee Valley (DH); 16 vs. Jeff Davis, 1 p.m.; 17 vs. Jeff Davis (DH), 12 noon; 21 vs. Selma (DH), 12 noon; 23 vs.

Selma, 1 p.m.; 28 at East Mississippi (DH); 30 at Alabama Southern.MAY: 1 at Alabama Southern (DH);
9-13 State Tournament, TBA.

(This report was written by Press-Register Correspondent Arthur L. Mack.)