

Rima eager for Year 2 with Kirkwood

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 13 March 2014 19:57 -

Todd Rima steered the Kirkwood Community College baseball team to a winning record last season after inheriting a ballclub that finished below .500 the previous year.

Now he's ready for the next step in rebuilding the program.

The Eagles finished 30-14 overall and 13-11 in ICCAC conference games in 2013 after going 21-33 and 9-15 the year before under Tim Evans. Rima likes what he's seen so far.

"We feel it's a group that has a chance to be pretty special," he said Wednesday. "They work really hard and I like where they're at heading into opening day."

Kirkwood is scheduled to play 10 games in six days during its spring trip to Winter Haven, Fla., starting Friday with single games against the Ontario Blue Jays and the University of Connecticut at Avery Point.

Rima took 28 players on the trip, including 15 pitchers, and he's anxious to see what they can do against live competition.

"It's going to be a good challenge," he said. "We'll find out where we're at as far as pitching depth. This gives us a chance to get a lot of guys in before we get into conference play.

"I think our pitching has a chance to be a strong point of our team," he said. "What I want to learn is, how much depth do we really have on the mound? Are we as deep as we hope we are? This week will give us a sure test and show us what we have on the mound."

The Eagles are scheduled to start the conference season with doubleheaders at Iowa Lakes March 22 and 23.

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Rima tabbed Brian Daphney and Cale Henke as his starting pitchers on opening day. He listed a tentative starting lineup of Angel Merced at catcher, Tyler Butz at first base, Ozzie Adams at second base, Randy Perez at third base, Sulliam Rios Reyes at shortstop, Zach Patterson in left field, Eric Schenck-Joblinske in center field, Shane Kemp in right field and Nick Jones as the designated hitter.

Jeffrey Castillo, Will Ross, Alexis Bauzo and Keaton Blackford are scheduled for starts on the mound during the trip. Alex Thompson and Matt Paciello are ticketed for action in the outfield and Milton Croes is scheduled for playing time in the infield.

Rima thinks he has a deeper ballclub this season, with a stronger bench and a batting order with more power. "We lost a great group of kids," he said. "We feel like we've added more depth, so our bench is better."

Blackford, one of the starting pitchers, is a Linn-Mar graduate who spent last season at Ellsworth Community College. Butz, the starting first baseman, is a freshman from Cedar Rapids Prairie. The Eagles have four other Metro products with outfielder Caleb Davison (Prairie), pitcher Spencer Dean (Prairie), infielder Noah Dostal (Washington) and outfielder Blake Stallman (Prairie).

Schenck-Joblinske, who has signed with Texas A&M, hit .362 last season. Merced batted .282. Henke compiled a 4-5 record and 1.66 ERA on the mound.

Rima has a new coaching staff this season with Gordy Nordgren, Ron Benich and Jason Belk serving as assistant coaches.

Kirkwood is scheduled to open its home campaign March 26 against Rochester Tech.

ROSTER

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SOPHOMORES

Ozzie Adams, IF/P, Clear Lake
Landon Ashbacher, P, Decorah
Alexis Bauzo, P, Carolina, Puerto Rico
Keaton Blackford, P, Marion
Milton Croes, OF/P, Noord, Aruba
Brian Daphney, P, Palm Harbor, Fla.
Jorge Figueroa, C, Carolina, Puerto Rico
Shawn Hagarty, U, Waterloo
Cale Henke, P, Hudson
Nick Jones, IB, Boynton Beach, Fla.
Shane Kemp, OF/P, Waterloo
Angel Merced, C/P, Guaynabo, Puerto Rico
Will Ross, P, Iowa City
Eric Schenck-Joblinske, OF, Cedar Falls
Shawn Simmons, P, Buffalo (Iowa)
David Sweeting, P, Nassau, Bahamas
Alex Thompson, OF, Marshalltown

FRESHMEN

Estiven Arvello, OF, Bronx, N.Y.
Adam Barbarich, OF, Perth, Australia
Cody Brandt, P, West Branch
Tyler Butz, 1B/3B, Walford
Jeffrey Castillo, P, Bronx, N.Y.
Ryan Curtis, IF, Altoona
Caleb Davison, OF, Cedar Rapids
Spencer Dean, P, Cedar Rapids
Noah Dostal, IF, Cedar Rapids
Adam Marra, P, Toronto, Canada
Ricky Martinez, P, Carolina, Puerto Rico
Todd Oberthien, P, Solon
Matt Paciello, OF/P, Lake Worth, Fla.
Zach Patterson, OF, West Burlington
Isrido Pearl, OF, Wellington, Fla.
Randy Perez, IF, Bronx, N.Y.

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Sulliam Rios Reyes, SS, Caguas, Puerto Rico

Austin Saikal, 1B, Lake Worth, Fla.

Austin Schmitt, IF, Highlands Ranch, Colo.

Kevin Scranton, P, West Palm Beach, Fla.

Hayden Sloane, C, Perth, Australia

Blake Stallman, OF, Swisher

Jamison Steege, P, Fredricksburg

Tyler Stika, C/P, Nassau, Bahamas

Zach Williams, P, Murfreesboro, Tenn.