

Rima hauls in 15 players for Kirkwood

Written by Jim Ecker
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Pitching, pitching and more pitching.

That was Todd Rima's primary goal on the recruiting trail this year as he stocked the Kirkwood baseball team for the 2015 campaign.

Mission accomplished, he feels.

Rima has signed 15 new players for next season. Ten of them are pitchers. And nine of the new players are lowans, another priority.

Three of the new players hail from Illinois and three are from New York.

Rima thinks he's signed the arms he needs to keep improving. Kirkwood finished 30-17 this season and 14-11 in the conference, but he wants more.

He feels pitching is the path to success.

"That was really big for us," he said. "We have two returning pitchers that gave us a lot of innings, and everybody else is going to be new.

"So we had to go out and get guys who aren't going to be ready in a year. They need to be ready right now. And we hope that we've done that."

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The 10 new pitchers are Nick Bruno (Rockford, Ill.), Zach Morrissey (Ankeny), Ryan Belk (Davenport Assumption), Brandon Brittain (Van Meter),

Inoel Nunez (Bronx, N.Y.), Dariel Checo (Bronx, N.Y.), Emanuel Castellano (Brooklyn, N.Y.), Ethan Howard (Prophetstown, Ill.), Austin Clemens (Dubuque Senior) and Ben Milks (Cedar Rapids Prairie).

Checo, Castellano, Howard and Clemens were signed recently. Rima said he was lucky to get all four pitchers at that stage of the recruiting process.

"Those are four huge pickups for us," he said. "Those are guys I think can make a major and immediate impact for us."

The other new players from Iowa are Toran Shahidi (Ames), Luke Hassman (Southeast Polk), Kolton Smith (South Tama) and Bryce Grimm (Xavier). They join Morrissey (Ankeny), Belk (Assumption), Brittain (Van Meter), Clemens (Dubuque Senior) and Milks (Prairie) to form 60 percent of the new recruiting class.

"We want the Iowa kids," said Rima. "And if you look in our conference, we signed more Iowa kids than any other team in our league."

"We want to go out and get the best kids, and if we can get them from Iowa, that's where we want to look first. I feel like we've done that with this class."

Rima likes where the program is headed as he prepares for his third year at Kirkwood.

"I know we're more excited to get to fall practice than we've ever been," he said. "We've got a lot of work to do between now and the beginning of the season, but we feel like the pieces are starting to fall into place."

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"One thing I like about this class, they cannot wait to be Kirkwood Eagles. This group can't wait to get here and put on an Eagles uniform and have a lot of pride in it. As a coach, you know you're heading in the right direction when you get that energy from them."

2014 RECRUITING CLASS

1. Ryan Belk, P/IF, Davenport Assumption, .369, 17 RBIs, 2-1, 3.92 ERA
2. Brandon Brittain, P/SS, Van Meter, .518, 9 HRs, 40 RBIs, 7-0, 1.49 ERA
3. Nick Bruno, P, Boylan Catholic H.S., Rockford, Ill.
4. Emanuel Castellano, P, Brooklyn, N.Y., 4-0, 1.54 ERA
5. Dariel Checo, P, Bronx, N.Y., 8-0, 0.00 ERA
6. Austin Clemens, P, Dubuque Senior, 5-2, 1.30 ERA, .341, 28 RBIs
7. Bryce Grimm, OF, Xavier, .288, 7 HRs, 19 RBIs

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8. Luke Hassman, 1B/3B/OF, Southeast Polk, .336, 2 HRs, 22 RBIs

9. Ethan Howard, P, Prophetstown, Ill., 3-3, 3.13 ERA

10. Ben Milks, P, Prairie, 4-5, 3.53 ERA

11. Zach Morrissey, P/3B, Ankeny, .374, 2 HRs, 26 RBIs, 2-3, 4.38

12. Jared Nimrick, OF, Kewanee, Ill., .443, 22 RBIs

13. Inoel Nunez, C/3B/P, Monroe Academy, Bronx, N.Y.

14. Toran Shahidi, C/U, Ames, .346, 2 HRs, 18 RBIs

15. Kolton Smith, OF, South Tama, .444, 7 HRs, 20 RBIs

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