

KCC baseball gets 3 DI transfers

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Kirkwood Community College baseball team will be bolstered this season by the addition of three transfers from NCAA Division I schools.

Brock Neuhaus of Pleasant Valley has transferred to Kirkwood from Kansas State, Jack Fitzgerald of Mason City Newman has moved here from Creighton, and Michael Haring of Iowa City High has joined the Eagles from the University of Iowa.

All three players are true freshmen who spent one semester at their colleges. All three of them will be eligible for Kirkwood this year.

Neuhaus and Haring are pitchers. Fitzgerald is a middle infielder.

Kirkwood Coach Todd Rima, entering his third year, was delighted to add three talented players to his squad.

"I think it's a great fit for us," he said Monday. "We really like the team that we have. And to add three guys that have been at the level that a lot of our guys want to get to and see what it takes, I think that's a great situation.

"We have three hungry guys that want to get at it, because they want to get back to that level."

Neuhaus was ranked as the seventh-best high school player in Iowa last season by Perfect Game USA. He compiled a 5-3 record and 1.93 ERA at Pleasant Valley as a junior in 2013, with 92 strikeouts in 69 innings, but was limited to only eight innings on the mound this past season.

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Kansas State wanted Neuhaus to take a redshirt year this season, but Neuhaus wanted to keep playing. "He has a lot of upside to him," said Rima.

Fitzgerald hit .339 with four home runs at Mason City Newman last season and was rated the third-best second baseman in the state by Perfect Game. He was named second team all-state.

"He's a very smart, intelligent kid," said Rima. "He just knows how to play the game."

Haring was ranked as the ninth best right-handed pitcher in Iowa last season by Perfect Game during his final year at City High.

"He has a great arm," said Rima. "This fall he got it up to 88-89 (on the radar gun). It's just a matter of putting it all together."

Kirkwood now has 18 pitchers on the team, although four of them play other positions as well. Fourteen of the pitchers are freshmen.

"That will be the telling story of our season right there, how fast they develop," said Rima, who has a 60-34 record in two years at Kirkwood.

"There's definitely talent there. I think it's the best depth we've had. It's just a matter of them continuing to grow and mature and become confident in themselves."

The Eagles are scheduled to begin the season with a four-game series against Johnson County Community College in Overland, Kan., Feb. 13-15.

They are scheduled to play 10 games in five days during a trip to Vero Beach, Fla., from March 13-17.

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Rima likes his club.

"In Year 3, it's the deepest team that we've had. The level of competition has gone up with the talent that we have," he remarked. "I like our roster. I love the group of guys that we have."