

Dahm ready for new venture with Mustangs

Written by Jim Ecker

Sunday, 18 January 2015 18:06 -



The Mount Mercy baseball team is scheduled to play its first 28 games on the road this season, beginning Jan. 26 with a four-game series against Southeastern University in Lakeland, Fla.

New coach Jack Dahm cannot wait to get started, regardless of how many road games they play.

"I don't care," he said. "I'm coaching baseball instead of selling flooring, so I'm happy to be on the road for 28 games. Nothing against selling flooring, but this is a lot better."

Dahm sold flooring after being dismissed as the head coach of the Iowa Hawkeyes following the 2013 campaign. He took a year off from being a head coach, but now he's back, this time at the NAIA level instead of the Big Ten.

"Baseball is baseball," he said. "It's teaching kids, it's being around kids. These guys have been really open-minded. We're trying to change the culture here."

Desi Druschel was fired midway during a 12-29 campaign last year. Dahm was hired to revive the program and help raise funds for Mount Mercy's massive new sports facility, which will include a new ballpark in a few years.

Meanwhile, the Mustangs will hold their indoor workouts in a converted warehouse near campus and will play their home games at Ken Charipar Field at Xavier High School.

Dahm ready for new venture with Mustangs

Written by Jim Ecker

Sunday, 18 January 2015 18:06 -

The warehouse is across the street from where the new ballpark will be built and suits Dahm just fine. It measures 45-feet by 200-feet, has a turf floor and is equipped with three batting cages.

"We've really fixed it up," he said. "It's a good place to practice. Really from a space standpoint, I have a better situation here than when I was at Iowa. It's our facility and we can be in there all day long."

Druschel began the recruiting process for this season while he was still the head coach. Dahm finalized some of those deals, most notably keeping former Kennedy star Alex Hayden in the fold, and he added a nucleus of other local products.

There are nine former Metro players on the roster now, including four Kennedy players with Hayden, Cody Bell, Adam Lloyd and Jimmy Lizarraga. Ryan Flaherty (Xavier), Colten Jourdan (Jefferson), Ben Larson (Linn-Mar), Sam Techau (Jefferson) and Christian Knox (Jefferson) are also on the club, along with former Kirkwood pitcher Cale Henke.

"We want to start from within. We want to get the local kids. That was a point of emphasis," said Dahm. "I think this could be a really good fit for a lot of kids."

The Mustangs also have in-state players from Iowa City, Wilton, Norway, Muscatine, Knoxville, Monticello, Betterdorf, Calamus, Mid-Prairie, Clarinda, Carroll Kuemper and North Scott on the roster.

Hayden and Henke were two of the top junior college pitchers in the state last year, with Hayden at Iowa Central and Henke at Kirkwood. Dahm has tabbed them as the No. 1 and No. 2 guys in the rotation, although Henke just joined the program and will not compete in the four-game series at Florida next week.

"I think they can compete with anybody," said Dahm.

Dahm ready for new venture with Mustangs

Written by Jim Ecker

Sunday, 18 January 2015 18:06 -

Hayden also will play at second base for the Mustangs.

Austin Czerwiec and Evan Boddicker were starting pitchers for the Mustangs last season and are back. "We'll have an experienced starting staff," said Dahm.

Lizarraga returns as Mount Mercy's top catcher, reuniting him with the other former Cougars on the club.

Dahm thinks Flaherty and Larson will begin the season in the bullpen, but could become starting pitchers as the season unfolds.

Dahm likes his club, but knows he's just getting started with a new program.

"I have a lot of question marks about the talent level that we're going up against and how our talent will compare to other teams," he said. "Our schedule is very demanding, but it's going to give me an opportunity to see our talent level against some of the team teams in NAIA baseball and to compete against some of the best players and learn what we need to work on.

"The talent level isn't where I want it to be," he said. "We've got some talented kids, but we have to get deeper."

Dahm thinks the planned new facility will boost recruiting.

"When I bring in a freshman now, they know in a couple of years we're going to have a new facility. That changes things," he said.

Dahm ready for new venture with Mustangs

Written by Jim Ecker

Sunday, 18 January 2015 18:06 -

"That gets kids excited, to be able to be a part of the building of the program. I think it's going to be very attractive for new kids to come here out of high school."