



2017 LATE-SEASON REPORT

Similar to the 2016 season, the Challengers have caught fire in the month of April. Riding a 16-game winning streak and having won 28 of their last 30, the team has surged to #16 in this week's Marucci NJCAA Division II national poll. Currently 33-9 on the season and 11-1 in the Ohio Community College Athletic Conference the Challengers are in 1st place heading into a key series versus crosstown rival Lakeland Community College this weekend. The Challengers are set to host Lakeland this weekend with double-headers on both Friday and Saturday. 1st pitch is set for 3 PM on Friday and 1 PM on Saturday at Ron Mottl Field.

Over recent weeks the offense has exploded, and currently ranks among the national leaders in several offensive categories. 49 team home runs are good enough to rank 4th nationally, and 369 runs scored ranks 9th. The offense also ranks in the top 15 in batting average, on-base percentage and slugging percentage through 42 games. Individually SO OF Matt Starcovic (North Olmsted/North Olmsted) has lead the offense all spring. He currently leads the team in batting average (.460), hits (58), 2B's (15), and runs (48). Starcovic is also 2nd in HR's at 10 and RBI's with 46 and recently was selected as OCCAC Player of the Week for 3rd time in the last 4 weeks. Freshman 1B/DH Matt Hilderbrandt (Bowmanville, ONT/Bowmanville) is providing the power leading the squad in HR's with 12 and RBI's with 50. Freshman INF Sami Mehmed (Strongsville/Strongsville) has helped to set the table for the middle of the line-up hitting at a .412 clip and a .520 on-base percentage while also leading the team in stolen bases at 15. SO INF Ricky Kemp has been a versatile player in the line-up seeing time at 2B, SS, and 3B will hitting .373 on the season.

The pitching staff continues to be led by a pair of sophomores. RHP Anthony Savarino (Olmsted Twp./Olmsted Falls) has led the way since settling into the #1 spot in the rotation earlier in the year and LHP Juan Perez (Cleveland /James F Rhodes) continues to shine and be extremely valuable in a versatile bullpen role. Savarino leads the staff in innings pitched (44.2), strikeouts (41) and is tied for the lead in wins at six. Perez is tied for the most appearances at 11, and has the lowest ERA on the staff amongst regulars at 1.39. He has record of 4-0 to go along with two saves. FR RHP Noah Evans (Massillon/Jackson) has been the only other pitcher to remain consistent in the weekend rotation. Evans is currently 4-2 in his seven starts, to go along with a 3.60 ERA. Several others have spent time working in the weekend rotation including FR RHP Dylan Brister (Elyria/Midview), FR LHP Cameron Johnson (Pataskala/Watkins Memorial) and recently R-SO LHP Axel Bueter (Wauseon/Bowling Green State University). Brister is tied for the team lead in wins at 6, Johnson boasts a 3.63 ERA in 7 appearances and Bueter has come on strong of late. Last week Bueter was selected as OCCAC Pitcher of the Week after collecting wins in starts versus Walsh University JV and Clark State Community College. Finally, FR RHP Dustin Redish (Hopedale/Harrison Central) continues to work in the closer role leading the team in saves (4) and is tied with Perez for the team lead in appearances at 11.

While a string of success has positioned the team well for the stretch run, two key conference series remain. As mentioned earlier the Challengers host Lakeland Community College this weekend and next weekend travel to Sinclair Community College for a 4-game OCCAC series. Lakeland and Sinclair are currently in third and second in the conference respectively and the results of these two series will play a huge part to determine the conference champion. Although Coach Agona is pleased with the progress his young team has made since the early season, he knows that there is still a lot of work to do. "We have obviously been playing well of late with the run we are on, but we know that the conference series the next two weekends will decide our fate in the conference. Lakeland is having a good season and Sinclair is always a tough test, especially having to go on the road. We need to be ready to go and put together our best baseball over the next two weeks to achieve our goal. We have been dealing with several key injuries and are going to need to have some guys step up and contribute for us until we can get some guys back healthy. We have had a great year thus far, but are looking forward to the challenge ahead over the next couple weeks."

As the end of the regular season nears, the Challengers are looking to play deep into the month of May as the look forward to post-season opportunities. Be sure to follow the remainder of the season with updates on Twitter @TriCBaseball and Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TriCBaseball>. For more information visit our website <http://www.tri-c.edu/athletics/mens-baseball/index.html> and statistics are available all season long at <http://stats.njcaa.org/sports/bsb/2016-17/div2/teams/cuyahogacommunitycollege>.