



## **2017 EARLY SEASON RECAP**

The Challengers are currently 6-7 early into the 2017 campaign following a couple trips south. On opening weekend, the Challengers visited the LakePoint Sports Complex in Emerson, Georgia to compete in the Perfect Game Spring Swing event. On Friday night the team lost to Georgia Highlands 12-3, before winning the nightcap 5-2 against Macomb Community College. On day two the Challengers once again took on Macomb Community College and Georgia Highlands, this time falling to both by the scores of 4-3 and 10-0 respectively. While the trip was not as successful as the team had hoped, the Challengers were able to salvage the weekend with a quality 10-6 win on Sunday against regional foe Vincennes University.

This past week the team hit the road south again, this time to North Carolina and Virginia for what was scheduled to be an 8-day 11-game road trip during spring break. To open the trip, the Challengers split a 4-game series against host Louisburg College. On Saturday the Challengers came from behind to win game one 7-2, before falling in game two 11-5. The story on Sunday was once again similar as the Challengers rallied from an early deficit to win game one 9-5; highlighted by a go-ahead extra inning grand slam by SO INF Ricky Kemp (Brunswick/Brunswick), but fell again 11-5 in game two.

Following an off day, the team was back in action again on Tuesday for a double-header against Wake Tech. The Challengers dropped a back and forth game one by the score of 10-8, but came back to split the day with a crazy 14-13 win in game two. Tuesday's nightcap saw a little bit of everything as both teams battled through unseasonably cold and windy conditions in North Carolina. The Challengers fell behind early, trailing 10-4 after just two innings of play. However, following a great relief outing by FR RHP Brad Suedkamp (Crestview Hills, KY/Dixie Heights) to keep the game close, the offense rallied with 5 runs in the 4<sup>th</sup>, 2 in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 3 in the 7<sup>th</sup> to take the lead. FR 1B Matt Hilderbrandt (Bowmanville, ONT/Bowmanville) had 2 of his 3 homeruns on the day in game two to go along with 5 RBI and SO OF Jim Parker (Middleburg Hts/Midpark) delivered a go-ahead 3-run HR in the top of the 7<sup>th</sup>. On Wednesday afternoon, the teams met again to conclude the 3-game series and the Challengers fell 9-8, dropping the series 2-1 against a quality Wake Tech team.

Winter Strom Stella forced significant changes to the backend of the spring break trip. Originally, the Challengers were scheduled to take on Potomac State in a 4-game series on campus in Keyser, West Virginia. However, after 6+ inches of snow fell in Keyser, the series shifted south to the campus of the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia. As a result of scheduling conflict and field conditions the series with Potomac State was reduced to a single 9-inning contest in which the Challengers came out victorious 3-1. Sophomore pitchers Anthony Savarino (Olmsted Twp/Olmsted Falls) and Juan Perez (Cleveland/James F Rhoads) were dominate all day long limiting Potomac State to just 1 run. A timely 2 RBI single by Matt Hilderbrandt gave the Challengers the lead in the 8<sup>th</sup> that they would not relinquish.

While the pitching staff has struggled to find consistency, the aforementioned Anthony Savarino has had 3 quality starts and Juan Perez has been lights out of the bullpen to pick up where he left off in 2016. Savarino has thrown a team high 18.2 innings with a 1.45 ERA, while Perez leads the team in appearances with 4 and has only allowed 1 run in 11.1 innings of work. Offensively the offense had been paced by SO CF Matt Starcovic (North Olmsted/North Olmsted) who is off to hot start leading the team hitting at a .409 clip, while FR 1B/DH Matt Hilderbrandt has provided some power leading the team in RBI's with 13 and homeruns with 3.

When asked about the team's results early season results, Coach Agona responded "While 6-7 is not the outcome we were hoping for at this point, we learned a lot about our club and what we need to improve on to get where we need to be when conference play begins. We put together a very challenging early season schedule, and showed when we played our best baseball that we can compete with anyone. We have a lot of new faces contributing and have already suffered a couple key injuries that we are trying to overcome. Like most clubs, when we throw strikes and make routine plays we have a great chance to win, we just need to start doing so more consistently."

This weekend, weather permitting the Challengers kick off the northern portion of their schedule with the home opener scheduled for Friday March 24<sup>th</sup>; a 4:30 PM DH vs. Notre Dame College JV. Friday's DH is the start of 19-game home stand at Ron Mottl Field, a place where the Challengers were an impressive 29-0 during 2016. Be sure to follow the progress of the Challengers all season long with updates on Twitter @TriCBaseball and Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TriCBaseball>. For more information visit our website <http://www.tric.edu/athletics/mens-baseball/index.html> and statistics are available all season long at <http://stats.ncaa.org/sports/bsb/2016-17/div2/teams/cuyahogacommunitycollege>.