



2016 SEASON PREVIEW

In 2016, the Cuyahoga Community College baseball team looks to build on successful campaign in 2015 where they finished 36-20 overall. During the 2015 season the Challengers spent time in the national polls ranked as high as 21st and finished in second place in the very competitive Ohio Community College Athletic Conference. Some of the highlights from the 2015 season included an opening-day double-header sweep of Catawba Valley Community College (NC) who went on to finish third at the NJCAA Division II World Series; three wins against conference champion Sinclair Community College; and winning streaks of seven and nine games during the season. While second-year Head Coach Evan Agona was pleased with the results in his inaugural season, expectations have been raised in his second year as the Challengers look to compete for the OCCAC crown and reach the post-season.

While six players from last year's team have moved on to 4-year programs, the 2016 squad will have some experienced players back in key positions. The returning position players are led by two catchers; including All-Conference selection Gabriel Vargas (Caracas, Venezuela/UE Jose Tadeo Monagas) and Richie Perez (Valencia, Venezuela/UE Patria Soberana). Additionally, sophomore infielders John Izquierdo (Corona, NY/Luna CC) and Windermi Mora (Valencia, Venezuela/UEC El Nazareno) were regulars in the lineup last season. Several other second-year players including first-basemen Tyler Lienerth (Grafton/Midview), outfielders Tyler Deutsch (Parma/Parma) and Jesus Roldan (Cleveland/Lakewood, as well as infielder Jacob Miller (Pickerington/North) look to see increasing roles.

In addition to some key returning position players, the coaching staff has brought in talented crop of freshmen. In the infield expect to see newcomers Manny Rodriguez (Cleveland/Lincoln West), Max Lavisky (Lakewood/Lakewood), Ricky Kemp (Brunswick/Brunswick), and Collin Minor (Medina/Medina) competing for significant time while several others will be in the mix. The outfield looks to be highly competitive this spring with a group of rookies led by Matt Starcovic (North Olmsted/North Olmsted), Jim Parker (Berea/Midpark), and Zach Desa (London, Ontario/H.B. Beal). Additionally, freshmen catcher Hunter Tome (Westerville/New Albany) will see time behind the plate.

One area thin on experience will be on the mound. The only returning arms that saw significant innings last season are sophomores Kyle Warner (Elyria/Midview) and Gaby Bordones (Valencia, Venezuela/Calusa Prep) who is transitioning to a pitcher-only this spring. Like the position players the pitching staff also has a couple players, Brandon Fatsie (North Olmsted/North Olmsted) and Jesus Roldan who saw limited time on the mound in their first season that will likely see expanded roles this spring.

Although there may not be lot of experience on the mound, the coaching staff is excited about the new additions to the program. Arms looking to make an immediate impact include Doug Smith (Galloway/Central Crossing), Mitch Cromley (Bowling Green/Bowling Green), Anthony Savarino (Olmsted Falls/Olmsted Falls), Juan Perez (Cleveland/ J.F. Rhodes), Billy Smith (Macedonia/Nordonia) who missed last season with injury and previously mentioned Max Lavisky. Several other new pitchers are also competing for innings and look to provide needed depth on the mound at this point.

The 2016 schedule will be highly competitive and kicks off with a trip to Emerson, Georgia March 4th – 6th. First pitch is scheduled for 4:30 PM on opening-day versus Georgia Highlands College. After returning home for a week the team travels south again during its' annual spring break trip where they are scheduled to play 12 games against four different opponents in North Carolina and Virginia. This year's home opener is set for Friday March 25th with a 3:00 PM double-header against Genesee Community College (NY). Ohio Community College Athletic Conference play starts-up up the following weekend as the team plays host to conference newcomer Edison Community College in a four-game series on April 1st and 2nd.

Be sure to follow the progress of the Cuyahoga Community College baseball team all season long with updates on Twitter @TriCBaseball and stats at <http://stats.njcaa.org/sports/bsb/2015-16/div2/teams/cuyahogacommunitycollege>