



2016 POST-SEASON PREVIEW

The 2016 season will go down as one for the record books, as the Challengers closed out an historical regular-season with a record of 44-12 overall and 14-2 in the Ohio Community College Athletic Conference (OCCAC). By posting a record of 14-2 in OCCAC play, the Challengers captured the OCCAC Championship crown for 2016. The championship was clinched on the road in game two of the series vs. Owens Community College, where the Challengers came away with a 6-4 come from behind victory. As a result of winning the OCCAC Championship, the team automatically qualifies for the upcoming NJCAA Region XII Tournament in Battle Creek, Michigan. The NJCAA Region XII Tournament is an 8-team double-elimination format event that begins on Wednesday May 18th at Bailey Park. In the opening round, Tri-C will take on Lansing (MI) Community College, who finished 6th during the Michigan Community College Athletic Association (MCCAA) regular season, at 3:30 PM on Wednesday afternoon. The two teams faced off less than two weeks ago, with the Challengers sweeping a double-header 6-1 and 8-1.

Following a slow start early, the team rattled off an impressive 18-game winning streak from March 19th to April 19th and finished the regular season winning 37 of their last 41 games. The Challengers also posted a perfect 29-0 home record at Ron Mottl Field, and have been an impressive 53-6 at home during the past two seasons. For their efforts the team is ranked 9th in the most recent Marucci NJCAA Division II national poll, and has been ranked as high as #6 in recent weeks. To date, six different players have been recognized by the Ohio Community College Athletic Conference as Players of the Week. Hitters earning recognition include Sophomore OF Jesus Roldan (Cleveland/Lakewood), Freshman OF Matt Starcovic (North Olmsted/North Olmsted) and Freshman INF Manny Rodriguez (Cleveland, Lincoln West), while three freshmen pitchers have garnered accolades; Doug Smith (Galloway/Central Crossing), Juan Perez (Cleveland/Rhodes) and Max Lavisky (Lakewood/Lakewood) has won the award twice.

Consistent starting pitching and key performances out of the bullpen have led the way for the team's success this spring. RHP Max Lavisky leads the team in wins with 9, including a no-hitter on April 15th versus Clark State CC. Lavisky currently boast a 1.54 ERA good for 2nd on the staff and has won 9 straight starts after losing his first outing of the season. RHP Doug Smith has been steady in his starts all season long and has a 7-3 record along with a 2.33 ERA. The remainder of the starting rotation for most of the season has been filled by Sophomore RHP Kyle Warner (Elyria/Midview) and Freshman RHP Mitch Cromley (Bowling Green/Bowling Green). Warner settled into the rotation prior to conference play and is currently 5-1 with a 2.49 ERA, while Cromley has been a mainstay in the rotation other than a missing an outing due to injury and is currently 4-1 with an ERA of 2.12. Several arms have provided key contributions out of the bullpen, but LHP Juan Perez has led the way. Perez has a team-high 17 appearances, a team-best 0.52 ERA and has a record of 4-1 to go along with 6 saves. Additionally, Freshman RHP Anthony Savarino (Olmsted Falls/Olmsted Falls), Sophomore RHP Gaby Bordones (Venezuela/Calusa Prep) and Freshman LHP Michael Byrne (Highland Heights/Mayfield) have contributed significant innings as bullpen arms and non-conference starters all season long.

The offense has been hot and cold throughout the season, but has had numerous players come up with key hits and at-bats in clutch situations all season long. Leading the way offensively is Manny Rodriguez (Cleveland/Lincoln West) who currently leads the team among qualifying hitters with a .422 batting average and is tied for the team lead in HR's with 6. Matt Starcovic leads the team in hits and runs scored, and is also tied with Rodriguez for team lead in HR's. Sophomore C Gabriel Vargas (Caracas, Venezuela) has been a key contributor in the middle of the lineup, as well as contributing outstanding defensive behind the plate, and currently leads the team extra base hits with 21 and is 2nd in RBI's with 33. Other players that have been very productive offensively have been; sophomore OF/INF Windermi Mora (Guacara, Venezuela) who is 2nd on the team with 18 extra-base hits and leads the team in stolen bases at 16, as well as sophomore SS John Izquierdo (Corona, NY/John Bowne) who is hitting .352 with 16 extra-bases after missing much of the early part of the season due to injury.

To follow the Challengers' quest to reach the NJCAA Division II World Series this week at the Region XII Tournament visit [http://www.mccaa.org/f/17/1/Baseball/2016 NJCAA Region XII Tournament.php](http://www.mccaa.org/f/17/1/Baseball/2016%20NJCAA%20Region%20XII%20Tournament.php). You can also continue to follow the progress of the Tri-C baseball team all season long with updates on our webpage <http://www.tri-c.edu/athletics/mens-baseball/index.html>; or on our social media accounts on Twitter @TriCBaseball and the Tri-C Men's Baseball page on Facebook. Updated stats can be found at <http://stats.njcaa.org/sports/bsb/2015-16/div2/teams/cuyahogacommunitycollege>