

FPU Baseball Preview

By Meaghan O'Donoghue

This upcoming season the Franklin Pierce baseball is a season of change for the Ravens. With changes in the coaching staff and several starting players graduating, it seemed there would be a lot of questions coming into this season.

After a successful 18 year run at Franklin Pierce, Jayson King resigned as head coach. In his time here, King built an impressive resume with many accomplishments including a 650-291-3 overall record, 7 NCAA Regional titles, and 28 draft-picks. King lead last season's team to the Division 2 World Series in Cary where the team suffered two losses to knock them out of the tournament.

King's departure leaves big shoes to fill, but the team is left in good hands. The coach for this season will be Mike Chambers. Chambers is a Franklin Pierce Alumni and one of those 28 players drafted under Coach King.

As a player, Chambers won NCAA Regional titles in 2003 and 2006. After graduating, he was drafted to the Boston Red Sox in the 10th round. He spent two years playing in the affiliate league. Before taking over as head coach this season, Chambers returned to Franklin Pierce and was an assistant coach under King for six seasons.

The change in coaching staff has been easy for the team, as Chambers has already been on the coaching staff for several years. "Biggest thing we wanted to do as a staff was keep it familiar for the guys," said Chambers.

Chambers is confident in the way they've been preparing for the season. As far as pressure to take over for Coach King, "the biggest thing for me is I'm also an alumni here, I always want this program to do good," he said, "I don't think there's any more pressure on us than we've put on ourselves in the past and now. We're used to Pressure".

Major changes this season come not only to the coaching staff this season, but also to players. Several starting players graduated last including Paul Covelle who was drafted. Jay Jabs drafted as a junior is also a loss for the team. The hit comes not to pitching who is still well stocked with starters such as Anthony Matarazzo and Johnny Amendola from last season; the loss is to the infield and outfield. The only starting players returning are 2nd baseman Kyle Hood, designated hitter Chris Lavorgna, and catcher Stephen Octave.

Even with the losses, the Ravens remain confident about the condition of the team. The team acquired several transfers that will help to fill the infield and outfield.

“Those guys are older guys who have played before at this level and who you know you’re going to have the production that you want to have,” said Chambers. “We pretty much know what they’re capable of and how they’re fitting in our lineup”. Although there are many new faces, there is some returning as well. John Friday, will be returning to the lineup.

After injury in the starting lineup his freshman year, Friday had the opportunity to Start.

“My first game was against Southern New Hampshire, our rival, and that was one of our biggest games that year,” recalled Friday, “I went in and learned a lot from playing in that game”.

“You get more and more experience and you know what it takes to win the game,” said Friday.

This season Friday will use the experience he’s gained over the last two years and apply it as the starting 3rd baseman. Coach Chambers has confidence in the junior.

“Friday is one of those players who is going to provide us with a lot of power. We expect him to have a breakout year,” said Chambers.

The schedule is tougher this season, according to Friday, however he thinks it will be better for the team in the long run, “We’ll know how it feels to play good baseball against good teams”.

A major loss in the season last year was the injury to pitches Miles Sheehan and Mike Lundin. The Ravens will be getting both of them back this season. Lundin has been cleared to play and Sheehan is schedule to be cleared a few weeks into the Season.

“They both look really good. They’re throwing, their arm’s aren’t swollen,” said Chambers, “We can expect to see Lundin right away”.

The Ravens have the ultimate goal in mind going into this year.

“We want to get back to the World Series. We want to win that World Series,” said Chambers, “We’re tired of just getting there”.

The Ravens season starts at the Ripken Experience in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina on February 23rd .

As for expectations for this year, Chambers said “the sky is the limit with this team and this talent”.