

Elon spring sports teams gear up for first SoCon seasons

Baseball

America's pastime returns to Elon University, as the baseball teams kicks off the season. The look of the team is totally different than last year's team, which finished 34-23-2. This year's team has 18 newcomers joining the roster. But head coach Mike Kennedy said the key to the season is still the same: Pitching and defense.



Mike Kennedy

However, with this new group of players, chemistry is a big factor.

"How successful we are will be determined by how our team plays together," Kennedy said. "We will get better as the year goes on," Kennedy said the senior laden pitching staff was the strongest aspect of this team.

"Matt Garner and Brian Hensen are the anchors of that staff, and both are hard workers," Kennedy said. Kennedy also singled out a few key returning players, such as senior outfielder Evan Tartaglia, junior third baseman Evan Erickson, junior catcher Matt Stocco and junior second baseman Gary Morris.

Kennedy stressed how important it was to get off to a good start, and said that key games were the first few games, but after that "you take it one game at a time." Kennedy did mention that the game against Appalachian State Feb. 27 would be a big one because it would be the team's first Southern Conference weekend, as well as the game against Miami March 5. Miami enters the season with a No. 3 national ranking from Baseball America.

Softball

Although the weather outside is still frigid and ice is still on the ground, the softball team is getting ready for action. The core of a team that graduated just one senior last year is still intact, leaving head coach Patti Raduenz very optimistic about the leadership coming back. Raduenz said leadership is the greatest aspect of this team.



Patti Raduenz

"The heart and dedication that this team has to get done what needs to get done in order to be successful is incredible," she said.

With the season opener looming, Raduenz said, "We need to come out and be a very consistent team. Do what it takes to get the job done and not worry about other things."

Raduenz said she does not like to look ahead and stresses that her players "take it one day at a time."

"Each game is important," she said. "On any given day anything can happen. Our biggest competition is ourselves. We don't play the scoreboard. We give everything we have, and leave everything we have on that field, and at the end of the day even if we loose, as long as we have left it all out there and gave it our best, then it was a success."

Raduenz said she hopes that the team's success against Southern Conference opponents last year, will help to ease the transition into the conference this year.

Men's Tennis

There is not much room for improvement when you finish 15-4, but head men's tennis coach Tom Parham is always looking to improve. The team graduated three starters off of last year's team, but Parham still believes this team can be better.



Tom Parham

"The experience might be down," Parham said, "but the biggest issue is that we are in a new league and this team has been on the same level competitively [as other teams in the Southern Conference] for a couple of years."

The mid-year additions of freshman Austin Fenn, Eric Haase and Sebastian Bredbreg will help ease the loss of the seniors, as will the continued strong play of two time all-conference player in singles and doubles, junior Pramote "Ter" Malasitt.

"I don't think we will miss too much from last years team," Parham said, "I will be disappointed if we don't wind up in the upper third of the SoCon."

This year's schedule will be rough; the team would like to avenge last year's loss to Furman and also has to play College of Charleston—which won the league last year—and Wofford in the same weekend.

"We don't have any easy matches on our schedule," Parham said. Parham is trying to work the new players into the mix as quickly as possible, but understands the need for patience.

"Our kids enjoy playing the game; they are good kids, and very enthusiastic."

Women's Tennis

Experience is a valuable commodity in any sport. Last year's women's tennis team started five freshmen. Now those players have gained valuable match experience and are ready to take this year's team to the next level.

"The girl's team will be better this year," said Tom Parham, women's tennis coach. "They are a year wiser, with a year of experience. They will be better."

Parham said he believes that with sophomore Kelly Fleck coming back from wrist surgery, and the addition of freshman Evin Prelec, this team will be very competitive.

"This team is a unique team," Parham said. "They are All-American players, so there is a lot of camaraderie. They are a close knit group of kids, willing to sacrifice."

The team's schedule affords it no room for error, as there are no easy matches. After an early loss two weeks ago to No. 9 North Carolina, the team has to turn around this weekend to play College of Charleston and Wofford on back-to-back days. The first home game will be at 1:30 p.m. on Feb. 27 against Presbyterian.

—Previews by Mike Vivencio
—Photos courtesy of Sports Information

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