

SPORTS WEEK

JUNE 7, 2012

Penn one to watch on the diamond

BY CRAIG T. GREENLEE
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Mount Tabor's Cole Penn was overlooked in the voting for this year's Central Piedmont 4-A All-Conference team. The senior first baseman didn't put up jaw-dropping numbers. Yet, there's no question that his hitting and fielding were instrumental in helping the Spartans make a deep run in the state baseball playoffs this spring.

"If a game was on the line, Cole was always the one we wanted at the plate," said Coach Mike Lovelace. "When pitchers made a mistake with him, he made them pay. Nobody will ever outwork Cole. He'll be successful at whatever he chooses to do because of his work ethic. No coach could ever ask for a better role model."



Mt. Tabor's Cole Penn is making a name for himself.

Penn finished his senior season with a .310 batting average to go with 14 RBIs, six doubles and three home runs, two of which came in the playoffs. Tabor's state championship quest ended with a disappointing 2-1 loss to East Forsyth in the quarterfinal round.

In Tabor's opening-round playoff game against powerhouse Charlotte Providence, Penn hit a homer to tie the game and the Spartans went on to take a

5-4 win in extra innings. Providence was No. 1 in the state and ranked eighth nationally by USA Today.

Against East Forsyth, Penn, 5-foot-9, 180 pounds, hit a towering drive over the leftfield fence for a home run to put his team on top. The Eagles, however, bounced back in the bottom of the ninth. The game was decided on a bases-loaded balk, which allowed the winning run to cross the plate in a 2-1 victory for East.

"Every team we played this year did everything they could to hamper Cole's effectiveness as a hitter," Lovelace said. "On everyone's scouting report, the message was: 'Don't let Cole Penn beat us.' All year long, he was solid and he continued to get better."

As a long-ball hitter who opposing pitchers didn't want to challenge, Penn saw a lot of breaking balls and off-speed pitches. By necessity, he learned to be more patient at the plate. In the process, he drew more walks because pitchers were careful when facing him.

"It forced me to be a lot more disciplined," said Penn, who played two years at Reagan before transferring to Mount Tabor. "I had to learn how to wait and be patient until I could get a pitch that I could drive. There used to be a time when I would always swing at the first pitch. That's not something I do anymore."

Penn, a left-hander who hits from the right side, is known for his bat, but he's equally gifted with his glove, at first base and in the outfield. He will most likely get the opportunity to play both positions at the college level. So far, the schools that have shown the most interest are Winston-Salem State, Brevard and Lenoir-Rhyne. Penn looks forward to making his mark at the next level.

"It's important that I keep working every single day," he said. "If you stop working to get better, you'll find that there's always somebody else who is working to better themselves. I just want to be as good as I can possibly be, and maybe one day, I'll play in the Major Leagues."

WFU TO BE JAMMIN'

Team headed to Virgin Islands b-ball tourney for first time

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AT UNIVERSITY OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Wake Forest will take on Big East foe and 2011 National Champion Connecticut in the opening round of the U.S. Virgin Islands Paradise Jam at University of the Virgin Islands on Friday, Nov. 16 on the island of St. Thomas.

The Demon Deacons and Huskies will tipoff at 6:30 p.m., ET. The winner will then face the winner of the Iona-Quinnipiac matchup on Sunday, Nov. 18, at 9 p.m. The losers of the two first-round games will meet on Saturday, Nov. 17, at 6:30 p.m.

All third-round games will be played on Monday, Nov. 19, with the championship game scheduled for 9 p.m.

First-round matchups on the opposite side of the bracket feature Mercer vs. George Mason and UIC vs. New Mexico.

This will mark Wake Forest's first-ever appearance in the Paradise Jam and the Deacons' first-ever regular season games played in the Caribbean. The Deacons played two preseason exhibition games in Nassau, Bahamas, prior to the 2006-07 season.

The last time Wake Forest played outside of the contiguous U.S. during the regular season came during the 1999-2000 season when the Deacons participated in the Rainbow Classic in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Wake Forest and Connecticut have met twice previously on the hardwood, splitting the matchups. The Deacons handily won the first meeting, 103-77, in the opening round of the Quaker City Tournament on Dec. 29, 1969, at the Spectrum in Philadelphia. In the most recent meeting, UConn defeated Wake Forest, 84-75, on

Dec. 2, 1991, at the Hartford Civic (now XL) Center.

Wake Forest has never faced Iona or Quinnipiac previously. The Deacons are 3-1 all-time vs. New Mexico and 1-0 vs. both George Mason and Mercer. Wake has never faced UIC, which is the alma mater of Deacon Head Coach Jeff Bzdelik.

Baseballers playing in summer leagues

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Members of Winston-Salem State's championship-winning baseball team will have little downtime this summer.

Many of the Rams will spend the next three summer months playing in highly competitive collegiate summer baseball leagues across the country.

Among them are rising senior first baseman and 2012 CIAA Player of the Year Aaron Jones of Kernersville. He will spend the season playing for the Wisconsin Rapids Rafters of the Northwoods Summer Collegiate League (NWL). The 16-team NWL is comprised of teams of the top college baseball players across the nation and North America. Teams span the entire Midwest, including Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota as well as

Ontario, Canada.

Joining Jones in the Northwoods League is all-CIAA and 2012 Daktronics, Inc. Division II All-Atlantic Region second baseman German Reyes. He will be spending his summer playing for the Lakeshore Chinooks in Milwaukee, Wisc.

Rising senior Paco Martin will be playing with the Martinsville Mustangs of the Coastal Plains League (CPL). Rising junior Joseph Herbert will also play in the CPL. He will pitch for the Asheboro Copperheads. Asheboro finished in second place in the West Division in 2011 with a 30-25 overall record. Herbert was 5-1 with a 4.06 ERA and 29 strikeouts in 57.2 innings for the Ram's squad this past season.

Rising seniors Dominique Fitzgerald and Brandon Harrison will be playing this summer for the Virginia Marlins and Kernersville Bulldogs, respectively. Both clubs are members of the Carolina-Virginia Collegiate Summer League.



German Reyes joins his team in battling St. Aug last season.

Hampton, NSU earn top MEAC honors

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The Hampton University department of athletics won its 11th straight Mary McLeod-Bethune Women's All-Sports Award, the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) announced recently.

The school was presented a \$20,000 check during a reception in Orlando, Fla. The Lady Pirates collected conference titles in cross country, indoor track & field, outdoor track & field and women's basketball, continuing a pattern of dominance in the MEAC in those sports. The Lady Pirates have won back-to-back cross country titles, nine indoor track titles in 10 years, six outdoor track titles in seven years and three straight women's basketball tournament titles.

The Lady Pirates also earned the MEAC's automatic NCAA Tournament bid in women's basketball for the third straight year, on top of back-to-back MEAC regular-season titles.

In all, Hampton tallied 99.5 points in the women's standings. Florida A&M came in second with 88.5 points, while Maryland Eastern Shore was third with 86 points.

Hampton has won 14 overall All-Sports trophies since joining the MEAC in 1996 (three men's awards including back-to-back victories in 2003 and 2004, and 11 straight women's awards, dating back to 2002).

Norfolk State won the Talmadge Layman Hill Men's All-Sports Award, its eighth straight. For the third straight year, the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) won the MEAC's Highest Graduation Success Rate Award.



Photo by Kevin Hartley

The Lady Pirates celebrate their MEAC Basketball Tourney win in March.

JCSU's Ming wins national title

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

A total of 10 members from the Johnson C. Smith University men's and women's outdoor track & field teams competed in the 2012 NCAA Division II Championships hosted by Colorado State-Pueblo at the DeRose Thunderbowl. The four members of the men's team earned 21 points to place 14th out of 53 universities; while the six women placed 13th out of 54 universities scored.

On the men's side, junior Akino Ming (St. Thomas, Jamaica) surpassed all participants in the 400m event to win the national title in 46.14 seconds, despite extreme heat conditions. Ming won his preliminary heat in 46.01. Fellow junior Winston Brown (47.30) placed 6th in the same event to earn his first individual All-American award. Brown achieved a personal best (46.67) in the 400m prelims.

The quartet of Brown, Ming, junior Jamille Callum (Orleans, Mass.), and sophomore Rolando Berch (St. Andrew, Jamaica) had two season bests in the 4x400m relay. The team won their preliminary heat in 3:08.71 (SB) and returned to place a close 2nd in 3:07.32. The men's team returns to JCSU with one new national champion and a total of five All-American awards.

Two members of the team (Ming and Brown) will now turn their attention to competing at the Olympic trials in an effort to make the Olympic team for the 2012 Summer Olympics in London.



Photo courtesy of A. Ming

Akino Ming prepares to compete in Pueblo, Colo.