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GTCC LANDS SEVERAL NEW RECRUITS IN EFFORT TO IMPROVE BASEBALL TEAM

JAMESTOWN – With only a few holdovers from last year’s Guilford Technical Community College baseball team, Coach John Barrow is rebuilding his team with several freshmen recruits and players who transferred from other colleges.

The Titans also are getting some extra help in the coaching ranks, with a renowned hitting coach and a professional strength and conditioning coach.

Alan Ashkinazy, former pro baseball player and coach of several teams in the Triad in recent years, is the hitting coach for the young Titans. Ashkinazy is owner and head hitting instructor of Greensboro Batting Center.

Barrow also is excited about the work that conditioning coach Carmine Pagano of McLeansville is doing “whipping the team into shape.” Pagano has a wealth of experience in strength and conditioning programs, including working with any NCAA, high school, middle school, AAU and UAAASA baseball programs. He also was a spring training assistant with the San Diego Padres for a couple seasons.

“There is a new attitude surrounding the baseball program and a renewed spirit of confidence and competitiveness,” Barrow said. This is the third year for the baseball program at GTCC, and Barrow said that last year’s squad not only was hit by injuries but some players didn’t perform to expectations. The team finished at 19-32.

Barrow said that bad weather delayed the Feb. 6 season opener at Finch Field in Thomasville. All Titan home games will be played at Finch Field.

The Titans have a potentially outstanding pitching staff, with five freshmen, six transfers from other colleges and two hurlers returning from last year’s squad.

The top pitchers could be a pair of freshmen, Dalton Shuford of Central Cabarrus High School and Matt Dillon of High Point. “Shuford will bring tenacity to the mound to go with ‘electric stuff,’” Barrow said. “Dillon also has dynamic stuff and will play a major role in the Titans’ success,” he said.

He’s counting on freshman lefthander Davarren Hamilton of Central Cabarrus competing for a starting pitching position and also be a relief pitcher. Freshmen Josh Springer of Fort Wayne, Ind., Preston Asbill of Asheboro and Kevin Rose Greensboro will compete for relief roles, he said.

Barrow also expects some experienced pitching help from southpaws Zach Horne from Belmont Abbey College, Anthony Bain from Catawba College and Ruben Torrellas from NC A&T, and righthanders Ricky Vaughn from Savannah College of Art and Design, Alex Britt of Mars Hill College and Timmy Dezean from Louisburg College.

Returning sophomore lefty Wes Satterfield and righty Jordan Covington, both from Burlington, could see expanded roles this season.

The Titans will have to build an entire new group of infielders. Two of the incoming infielders have Major League roots. Freshman Paco Martin of Raleigh, son of former major leaguer Norberto Martin, and freshman Abe Fernandez of Ft. Lauderdale, son of former Major League All-Star Tony Fernandez, will battle for playing time. Freshmen Israel Hernandez of Homestead, Fla., and JK Filauro of South Salem, NY, also are candidates for infield positions.

Hector Bautista from the Dominican Republic is a power-hitting third baseman that could be successor to last year's All-region Hector Bello. Will Whitty of Springfield, VA, and Ricky Martin of Raleigh also will compete for playing time on the infield.

Sophomore Jordan Covington of Burlington is the only returning outfielder, and is being joined by Patrick Koontz, a transfer from Savannah College of Art and Design, and transfer Conor Burke of Suffolk Community College.

Wes Satterfield, Matt Dillon and Davarren Hamilton also could see outfield duty when not pitching.

Others contending for playing time in the outfield are transfers Kevin Sanders from Wingate University (and High Point) and Jeremy McLeod of Sanford. Walk-ons Kenny Graham of Laurinburg and Nathan Naturile of Thomasville also will be available for outfield duty.

The Titans have experience at the catching position with Jack Shelton of Liberty and returning sophomore Brent Young of Greensboro. Shelton finished last season behind the plate and also hit .308. Young was hobbled by injuries but established a .381 batting average while seeing limited playing time.

Catcher Alan Filauro of South Salem, NY, is a highly-touted recruit who has exceptional arm strength, Barrow said. The Titans also have hard-hitting freshman Chris Huie of Sneads Ferry, transfer Mike Russo of Palm Beach Community College, Lincoln Willis of Belmont and Travis Horn of Durham competing for playing time at the catching position

"All of the pieces are in place for the Titans to move from obscurity to contender," Barrow said.

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