



News Release

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Baseball Fever Hits Century College

Hungry for spring, baseball fever has hit Century College.

This is the first spring that Century will have a men's baseball team, and the campus is ready to focus on the sweet smell of green grass and the sounds of baseball.

The Century players have come roaring back from a spring-break tournament in Orlando, Florida, where they proved that they are ready to compete. The team went 6-4 in Florida, playing some of the best two-year colleges in the country. Coached by veteran coach Dwight Kotila, the team has what it takes to score a winning season – good pitching, hitting, throwing and running.

As a result of their early-season performance in Florida and Kansas, Century last week was ranked 8th in the national baseball poll conducted by the National Junior College Athletic Association Division III.

First baseman Nick Lauer of Robbinsdale was named national baseball player of the week by the NJCAA

on March 16. The 6'2" Lauer totaled 12 hits on 25 at-bats with 10 runs scored for the week. He also contributed seven doubles, a triple and seven RBI's.

"We've got a good group of guys," said Kotila, watching an intense practice in the Century gym. "This is my 14th year coaching at the college level and I would say that this team has a chance to do pretty well. They are talented and, equally important, they work hard."

Kotila has recruited a promising group of 24 young men from all across the region. They have been running, weight-lifting, hitting and throwing in the gym, and they are hungry to hit the field and play ball. The players first came together as a team last fall. They played 15 scrimmages during their fall practice season.

"We keep them busy," said Kotila. "They have five to six days a week of practice, two to three hours a day. We also have mandatory "study tables" Monday and Thursday nights in the library. They also use the writing center, math tutors and peer tutors. They are learning to master time-management skills. Really, it's all about discipline. Our goal is for them to not only transfer to a top four-year college and continue playing baseball, but also stay on track and get their associate in arts degree. They each meet with a counselor and set up their academic plan."

So far, the baseball players are each taking 15 credits – more than the average at Century – and this fall they had a team grade point average that is higher than average – 2.82.

"Our players' goal is to go on and play at a four-year school once they graduate from Century in two years," said Kotila. "They are all on track to make that happen."

Pitchers Jeff Heath of New Brighton and Josh Hoekstra of Westin, Wis., said they have high expectations for the season. "We are blending together as a team really well," said Heath. "Everybody gets along."

Their goal this season is to make it to the NJCAA World Series, which is held in May in Tyler, Texas.

This may seem like a steep goal for a brand-new program, but prior to coming to Century College, Kotila

led two other NJCAA baseball programs to a total of seven NJCAA World Series. And he likes how this inaugural team is put together. “We still have a long ways to go this year, but if we can get to the regional tournament, I like our chances,” said Kotila.

“You gotta love baseball to play in college,” said Heath. It’s pretty intense.”

The team resumes play on March 30 at Iowa Lakes Community College. The first baseball home games are April 9 at 1 and 3 p.m., and April 12 at 2 and 4 p.m. The Century College Veterans Club will be sponsoring an honor guard to dedicate the first home games of baseball and softball, and students will receive free food at the games.