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Saint Mary's Baseball Preview

By Mikaela Cowles



Troy Channing Photo Tod Fierner

a great crop of freshman kids, who we think are going to compete right away," giving them a balanced club.

Saint Mary's will open the season against defending Western Athletic Conference regular season champions San Jose State on February 19, at Louis Guisto Field.

Even with one of the strongest schedules in years, Soto said, "Our schedule actually is working toward helping us this year." Playing 55 games in just 12.5 weeks last season, the Gaels will play 54 games in 14 weekends this year. The extra time will allow them to rest and avoid fatigue. Fresh bodies will be important this season, as Saint Mary's faces nine games against 2009 NCAA Tournament teams, three series against conference champions, San Jose State, UC Irvine, and Gonzaga; and one series against a 2009 College World Series participant, Southern Mississippi.

A strong schedule and a new look from the Gaels shows the promise for a successful Saint Mary's season.

The Saint Mary's College baseball team is looking forward to a promising season. Despite losing four seniors and four juniors to the 2009 Major League Baseball draft, head coach Jedd Soto said, "We are returning quite a few guys."

Finishing just above .500, with a 28-27 record, the Gaels will rely heavily on their pitching for success. "If you can pitch, you can win," Soto said. He is confident in his new Friday, Saturday, and Sunday starting rotations.

Senior Brandon Berl will move back out of the bullpen to the Friday slot. As a closer last year Berl recorded six saves, and Soto said, "We feel he'll give us a chance to win each Friday." Sophomore Kyle Barraclough posted a 4.7-ERA last season in nine starts and will take the mound on Saturdays. In the Sunday slot, Marc Anderson will pitch for the Gaels. Soto described Anderson as "a little bit of a surprise for us last year;" he pitched 18.2 innings in his last three appearances, giving up just two earned runs and recording 13 strike outs.

Offensively, the Gaels have the versatility of a right- or left- handed dominant line-up. Among the returning batters is homerun slugger Troy Channing. Breaking the SMC single season homerun and RBI record his freshman year, with 20 homeruns and 75 runs driven in, Channing finished the season hitting .376. With 14 more homeruns, Channing will break the SMC all-time record.

Adding to the Gaels' strong pitching and hitting, Soto said, "We have



Brandon Berl will pitch on Fridays for the Gaels. Photo Tod Fierner

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