2015 WILDCATS BASEBALL: Preseason Report

By Khayla Gladney

The 2015 West Los Angeles College baseball team is “headed in a great direction” said head baseball coach Bob Grant. His confidence comes from the team having had a great fall practice season and making big strides in the pitching position. Sophomore Jeffrey Davis shows outstanding potential as a pitcher. In fact, Coach Grant believes that he is going to be one of the top pitchers in Southern California and become a legitimate prospect that pursued by a variety of pro scouts and schools. Jeff graduated from Muir High School in Pasadena, California.

Another player that has impacted the team is Grant Livornese. Grant graduated from Mira Costa High School and began his college career at the University of Arizona. He is expected to be West’s second pitcher. Eddie Martinez is a freshman pitcher from Westchester High School. The coach projects that he will be West’s third pitcher. Coach Grant has a number of other players who he expects to have a significant role pitching including Mark McEntee, a sophomore from El Segundo High School, and freshman Tommy Gutierrez from Santa Monica High School.

Pitching is not the only area that excites Coach Grant. In other positions, sophomore Myles Mendez, a strong hitting outfielder from Long Beach Poly High School is also being recruited, as well as second-year player, first baseman Zack Cooper from El Segundo High School. Mendez and Cooper are among several teammates who give Wildcats a competitive advantage in the 2015 season. In each position, there is good competition, and the second basemen are led by first-year player Augie Encinas from Mary Star High School. The short stop position is expected to take on an international flavor with sophomore Mateus Vakuda from Ibiuna, Brazil, playing the position. Coach Grant has three good third base prospects that are fantastic players as well as an extremely talented outfield who are all freshman. The catchers will be led by sophomore Greg West from St. Bernard’s High School, and first-year player Michael Strosnider from Torrance High School.

Coach Grant has multiple players that are being recruited by schools all over the country and by the different levels of professional baseball. He expects the team and individual players to garner more attention as the season progresses. The team’s goal this season is to make the playoffs with an ever watchful eye on the ultimate prize of a State championship. Coach Grant said, “If that’s not your goal every year, then something’s wrong.” He has a team this year that plays good defense with good pitching, so he knows they will be able to compete and cause some damage this season.

Academically, Coach Grant said, “they better continue to do well in the classroom since baseball has been the leading team in GPA at West Los Angeles College.” He is proud that 90% of his players have graduated from 4-year schools. Seventy young men have moved on to continue their education at the university level and play baseball since the program was reinstated seven years ago. Three players have been drafted to the pros, with two of them still playing as of the 2015 season. Other Wildcat alumni include two pitchers in the world baseball classic, two college All-Americans, and a number of players that were All-League in different college divisions.

Coach Grant was formally drafted by the New York Mets and played in the minor league for several years. His coaching career began in 1989 at South Torrance High School. He also coached at El Camino College, Brentwood, and had 10 years with the LA Dodgers. He has been coaching at West Los Angeles College for 7 years and is very happy to lead a baseball program that helps young people pursue their academic and athletic dreams.

GO WEST. GO FAR.