

Beatrice Daily Sun

Attacking the MINK

By Jane White/Daily Sun sports editor

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Beatrice's Bruins summer collegiate baseball team will open its MINK League season at home Thursday night against the Topeka, Kan., Golden Giants at 7 p.m. at Christenson Field.

While a new group of Bruins are beginning the defense of last year's MINK League championship, the league itself will have a new look in 2009.

The Bruins will be going for their third-straight MINK League title this season, having also won the championship in 2007.

Four new Missouri teams have joined the MINK League this season - the Sedalia Bombers, the Joplin Outlaws, the Nevada Griffons, and the St. Joseph Mustangs.

With the addition of the new teams, the MINK League will have 10 teams in 2009 and will be divided into two divisions - North and South.

The Bruins will play in the North Division, along with the Chillicothe, Mo., Mudcats, the Clarinda, Iowa, A's, the St. Joseph Mustangs and the Topeka, Kan., Golden Giants.

Playing in the South Division will be Joplin, Kansas City's Mac-N-Seitz A's, Nevada, the Ozark Generals from Springfield, Mo., and Sedalia.

"We're excited about the new league format," Bruins manager Bob Steinkamp said.

Steinkamp said both Nevada and Joplin moved into the MINK League from the Jayhawk League. Sedalia is a new team, while St. Joseph is back after not having a team the past two seasons.

The Bruins, Steinkamp said, are probably in the tougher of the two divisions.

"I think the (North) is a little stronger overall than the other side, at least on paper," Steinkamp said.

Each of the MINK League teams will have a 34-game regular-season league schedule.

"We'll play each team in our division six times and cross over and play a two-game series with the teams from the other division."

Steinkamp said the new league schedule will help teams cut down on travel.

The overall league champions will be decided in a best-two-out-of-three series between the North and South division champions. That series is slated for July 21-23.

The two MINK League division winners will both receive automatic berths in the National Baseball Congress World Series, which will be held July 31-Aug. 14 in Wichita, Kan.

Last year, the Bruins finished third overall in the national tournament, their second-best finish ever.

"Our ultimate goal is to get back there (World Series) this year," Steinkamp said.

Non-division champions will have a chance to qualify for nationals by winning the NBC Regional Tournament, which will be held July 25-30 in Clarinda.

"We think we have an extremely competitive schedule," Steinkamp said.

Steinkamp has high hopes for the 2009 Bruins.

"Every single one of these guys is already or will be a very good Division I caliber player," Steinkamp said. "Well over half of this team will go on to play professional baseball.

"The talent level is really high."

Ten of the Bruins' roster players played for Big 12 Conference teams this spring.

There are four players from Texas A&M on the Bruins' squad, three from Nebraska, two from Texas and

one from Texas Tech.

A number of the other players are from junior colleges and will be headed to Division I programs this falls, Steinkamp said.

Among the players returning from last year's roster include pitchers Sean Bartholomew, Micah Busboom, Brian Feekin, Stephen Kohlscheen, Mike Mariot and Shane Minks, infielders Travis Parker, Tyson Parks and Mark Ramos, outfielder Tyler Farst and catcher Kyle LaFrenz.

Steinkamp said several roster players could be selected in the Major League Baseball draft, which started Tuesday and continues through Thursday.

Players currently on the Bruins roster include:

Sean Bartholomew, 6-0, 185-pound left-handed pitcher from Beatrice (Fort Hays State University)

Anthony Bemboom, 6-1, 180-pound catcher/outfielder from Sauk Rapids, Minn. (Iowa Western Community College)

Micah Busboom, 6-4, 190-pound right-handed pitcher from Beatrice (Southeast Community College-Beatrice)

Jordan Etier, 5-11, 175-pound infielder from Austin, Texas (University of Texas).

Tyler Farst, 6-1 210-pound outfielder, Cedar Park, Texas (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

Brian Feekin, 6-5, 225-pound left-handed pitcher from Papillion (Iowa Western Community College)

Ross Hales, 6-3, 190-pound left-handed pitcher from Baytown, Texas (Texas A&M University)

Ryan Hughes, 6-7, 220-pound left-handed pitcher from Foothill, Calif. (Chabot College)

Stephen Kohlscheen, 6-6, 200-pound right-handed pitcher from Norman, Okla. (Cowley College)

Kyle Lafrenz, 6-2 220-pound catcher from Sioux City, Iowa (Indiana State University)

Scott LeJeune, 5-11, 185-pound outfielder from Austin Texas (Texas Tech University)

Kevin Lusson, 6-1, 205-pound infielder from Austin, Texas, (University of Texas)

Mike Mariot, 6-0, 177-pound right-handed pitcher from Carroll, Texas (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

Ryan Morgan, 6-0, 195-pound catcher from Flower Mound, Texas (North Central Texas College)

Shane Minks, 6-3, 205-pound right-handed pitcher from West Columbia, Texas (Texas A&M University)

Keegan Morrow, 6-0, 165-pound outfielder from Oklahoma City, Okla. (Seward County (Kan.) Community College)

Travis Parker, 6-1, 200-pound infielder/right-handed pitcher from Lincoln (Seward County Community College)

Tyson Parks, 6-2, 215-pound infielder/outfielder from Steinauer (Arkansas-Little Rock)

Sean Potter, 6-6, 215-pound right-handed pitcher from Grand Forks, N.D. (Arkansas-Little Rock)

Mark Ramos, 5-11, 189-pound infielder/right-handed pitcher from East Moline, Ill. (Augustana College)

Jordan Roualdes, 6-2, 207-pound left-handed pitcher from Sonoma, Calif. (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

Adam Smith, 6-3, 200-pound infielder from Spring, Texas (Texas A&M University)

Mike Strong, 6-0, 170-pound left-handed pitcher from Afton, Minn. (Iowa Western Community College)

Randall Thorpe, 6-1, 175-pound outfielder from Grapevine, Texas (Texas A&M University).

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