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Meramec Magic Athletic News

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Baseball Team Preps For Tough Region XVI Tourney

The Magic baseball squad is attempting to put the pieces back together after a recent mini-slump and regroup for its final few games before heading into the rugged Region XVI Tournament May 10-13 in Kansas City, MO at Maple Woods College. The Jekyll-Hyde Magic after having won four straight games, have now lost four straight. However, all seven teams may be in the same predicament.

"You have seven teams that are comparable talent-wise, pitching, and defense," said coach **Tony Dattoli**. "There's been a lot of errors in this region this year, a lot of questionable defense from all seven teams including ourselves. It's up for grabs, it's anybody's to take."

And Meramec definitely has the players to take it. Even though Dattoli anticipates getting seeded anywhere from fourth to sixth, he has the players to get the job done.

"I think our pitching has come full circle," said Dattoli. "We struggled early and they've really been the only reason we are in ballgames at this point. The last 25 games the pitching has been great."

Lefthanded sophomore captain **Brad Bichel** (St. Charles) has five wins and 43 strikeouts on the season. He threw outstanding against regional power Crowder College Apr. 21, hurling Meramec to a complete game 2-1 win while fanning ten. Another lefty, **Jake Morgan** (Mehlville), has also provided a quality arm and heart.

"He leads by example," said Dattoli of Morgan. "He's given us tremendous innings and tremendous outings. We've made crucial errors in crucial situations for him on routine plays and that's what haunts him and gives him that .500 record. He could easily be 10-0 this year."

Actually, Morgan is a bit better than .500 with a 6-4 mark and a strong 3.76 ERA. He's been a workhorse, throwing 67 innings so far. Sophomore **Jordan Buck** (Pacific) has also thrown many quality innings as both a starter and closer, while **David Birkby** (Parkway West) sports a 4-1 mound record.

The offense has been sporadic, but when it's been good, it's been great. "**Jon Wilson** (St. Charles), **Jon Myers** (Ft. Zumwalt S.), **Larry Von Dracek** (Hazelwood West) - they've all been real streaky - they've had hot days and they've had cold days," said Dattoli. "The unfortunate thing is it seems they're all hot on the same day or they're all cold on the same day. When you've got three guaranteed outs it's tough for us to put runs across the plate."

The hitting was on its "hot day" against Florissant Valley Apr. 19 in a 13-2 blowout win. Myers was three-for-three with a home run and three RBI's, while infielder **Michael Hope** (Webster Groves) was three-for-four with a homer and three RBI's.

In the nightcap against Flo, the bats stayed alive to pull out a 7-6 comeback win in 8 innings. Sophomore **Lou Vangel** (CBC) homered, and later executed the suicide squeeze to perfection for the tying run in the seventh inning.

Freshman outfielder **Jon Moran** (Vianney) has also provided the team a boost with both his stellar glove in left and his bat, earning a starting spot in the line up.

Softball Magic Head To Moberly For Regional Tourney

In what has become a season of attrition, the Magic softball squad has persevered against a short roster and will play in the Region XVI Tournament on Sunday, May 6 in Moberly, MO. Meramec will take on two seed Crowder in a 10 a.m. contest.

"We'll see what happens," said first year head coach **Kim Ridenour**. "Everybody wants to play, and everybody wants to win. They (Crowder) definitely won't take us lightly."

Ridenour will send either hurler **Leslie Kennedy** (Quitman, Ark) or **Diana Keller** (Pacific) to the mound. The coach is looking for even better things from Kennedy, a freshman, next year.

"Leslie, if things go right, could easily be a top notch pitcher next year," said Ridenour. "If we didn't need her so bad out in the field, she would have been my top pitcher this year. Our scores don't really reflect what we've been doing."

The scores, which tally up to a 4-36 regular season record, reflect a scant roster of 9-12 players with injuries and other unexpected crises taking its toll on the team. However, Ridenour still counts her blessings.

"This team, they're such a good group of kids," she said. "They all know what they're doing. We won against Lindenwood (JV) with eight players. We're capable of winning every single game. I know our record looks horrible, but if you look at the runs they (opponents) score in one bad inning we had. You take that inning out and you've got 2-1 ballgames or very, very close ballgames."

The win over Lindenwood JV was in a tournament game where it was mutually agreed that eight players were acceptable to all parties. Keller pitched the Magic to a 9-5 win, despite playing just two outfielders. Ridenour also praised the team's hitting, citing Kennedy, first baseman **Sonya Galloway** (Farmington), and outfielder **Leah Thomas** (Herculaneum.) Outfielder **Jeanna Streiler** (Pacific) has also shown improvement.

"Jeanna has been working hard on bunting and slapping," said Ridenour. "I think she was wanting to hit real big like her sister last year but the thing is she's so fast she's better as a bunter and slapper."

Speed has also arrived in mid-season with the recruitment of two players from the soccer team, **Tara Baechle** (St. Pius X) and **Theresa Weil** (Oakville.)

"She's done fairly well," said Ridenour of Baechle. "Over the weekend she had two RBI's. For not playing ball in a long time you can tell her work ethic from soccer where she really excels."

Weil, meanwhile, has been an important cog at first base. "She's really picked it up fast as a first baseman and filled a void that we really, really needed filled," said Ridenour.

At this point in the season, this squad of survivors isn't close to ready to call it a year. "We've all stuck this out," said Ridenour. "A lot of people would have stopped or quit or given up. Every time we had a player that fell through or quit, they were right there. They've all been a really great group of kids."

Area Soccer Standouts Sign With Smugala For '07

Six local soccer standouts, all from tradition-laden programs, have signed with coach Brian Smugala for the fall, '07 campaign.

A pair of transfers from Quincy College join the Magic in center-midfielder **Corey Kossman** and defender **Jimmy McDonnell**. Both are CBC High alum and were part of the Cadets state championship team their senior year in 2005.

From the high school ranks, forward **Ian Porta** will help bring scoring punch up top. Porta scored 20 goals and had eight assists for Marquette High last fall. As a junior, he led the Mustangs to a state final four berth. Porta was a three year All-Conference honoree and a Post-Dispatch All-Metro (third team) pick as a senior.

Also from Marquette High is **Stephen Carenza**, a center-midfielder with seven goals as a senior and an All-Conference team pick.

Another center midfielder, **Matt Mantia** signs out of Webster Groves High where he served as a three year team captain and team MVP last fall. Mantia was also a first team All-Conference selection last year.

Goalie **Chris Miller** signs from CBC High where he recorded nine shutouts in the fall for the Cadets.

The Magic were 14-4-1 last season and won the conference championship.

Magic Basketball Squad Inks Local Talent For '07-08

Several men's basketball signees have inked with coach Randy Albrecht to join the Magic for next season. The top scorer among them is Bayless High's **Mersad Ramic**, a 6'2" sharpshooter who averaged 22 points per game for the Broncos last season. Another offensive player is Affton High's **Josh Dale**, a 6'4" scorer with a 17 points per game average along with 10 rebounds as a senior.

Demeatrice Autrey at 6'2" arrives from Hazelwood West High with a 13 points and seven rebounds average. **Felix Spates** is also a double-double average player from S. Pemiscott County High with 12 points and 12 rebounds per game. **Drew Moore**, a 6'2" Northwest High player, has a 12 points and eight rebounds average.

From nearby Parkway West, 6'2" **Eddie White** arrives by way of Missouri Valley College where he red shirted this past year. Also, **Branden Crites** enters from Hallsville High by way of Columbia College.

Meanwhile, guard **Richard Williams** (Lindbergh) has signed with Lincoln University, a D II program in Jefferson City. He averaged nine points a game for the Magic in '06-07, including a 83% free throw percentage and hit 44% of three point shots.

Another player from this past season, forward **Alex Jackson** (Ladue) made a good showing for Meramec at the NJCAA Men's Basketball Coaches Association All-Star Classic game recently in Kilgore, Texas. Jackson, in 16 minutes of court time, scored 8 points, pulled down 4 rebounds, had two assists, and two blocks. His squad, a mixture of Juco DII and DIII players, lost 83-79 to a similarly compiled team.