Softball Magic Gain Valuable Experience In Texas Losses

While painful at the time, a few drubbings at the hands of some Division I Texas teams are paying dividends for the STLCC-Meramec softball squad. On their recent Spring Break trek to the Lone Star State, Meramec went 0-8 to teams that had also been playing outdoors several weeks longer than more northward teams like Meramec with their mild Texas temperatures.

“Coming back from Texas, playing those D-I schools in Texas we learned a lot about the game itself and about ourselves,” said first year coach Kim McCall. “The team is improving each game. We’re still working well together, learning new things about each other, and try to put those little pieces of the puzzle together each game.”

Those pieces came together last weekend in the first day of the Meramec Invitational when the Magic upended Central Methodist JV 11-8, and Madison Area Tech (Wisconsin) 7-2. And, it was a banner day for sophomore pitcher Tiffany Stock (Pacific) who dominated on the mound and at the plate. She was the winning pitcher against Madison Area, but her big highlight was against Central Methodist when she cracked a two run homer.

“It was pretty cool, it was the first time I’ve ever hit one in my entire life,” said Stock. “I was in shock. I couldn’t really believe it just happened. I saw my dad when I rounded third. He had a smile from ear to ear so it was pretty cool to see how happy he was.”

Coach McCall says Stock sets the tone for the team as a sophomore.

“She’s a leader on the mound, she gets the job done and relies on her defense to do the rest and as long as everybody is in the game that day and playing hard just a spark from delivering that pitch to the plate means a lot,” said McCall.

Third baseman Kayla Mahoney (Fox) is also a sparkplug to the Magic with her agile play at the hot corner. Mahoney, likewise, is optimistic as to how this season could play out.

“We all hit, we were all fielding great, we just had really good games,” said Mahoney. “The first person that hits, it just gets consistent through the whole line up, we just all hit and keep the momentum going. I think we can go pretty far. In our conference, I think we’re one of the best teams. It’s just we have to have our heads on and be ready to play and bring what we have.”

Meramec brings a strong 12 players with sophomores Shannon Beatty (Kirkwood), Jess Boeger (Affton), Tiffany Theobald (Houston, TX), and Jamie Aldrich (Parkway South). Freshmen include Patsi Huebner (Washington, MO), Casey Newman (Rolla), Nicole Molly (Seckman), Mallory Acklin (West Plains, MO), and Cera Armistead (Rolla),
The Magic will open April in the Indian Hills Tournament Friday and Saturday, Apr. 2-3 in Iowa, before returning home to host East Central Monday (Apr. 5), and Mineral Area on Wednesday (Apr. 7). The month will be a busy one before the team opens the Region XVI Tournament Apr. 30.

Offense Proves Explosive For Baseball Magic In Blowout Wins

One thing the STLCC-Meramec baseball team has proven it can do is score runs, and in bunches. The Magic, with a 16-13 record, erupted for a five run third inning against visiting Three Rivers Tuesday (Mar. 30) and held on for a 5-2 victory. In that inning, a combo that is becoming increasingly deadly at the plate, Smith and Smith, got key hits.

With two runs already in, sophomore Les Smith (Dyersburg, TN) stroked an opposite field double down the left field line to score Gerry Roam (Francis Howell North). The smooth swinging Smith says much off-season work has yielded a total hitter at the plate.

“I’m seeing the ball well,” said Smith. “Coach Dattoli’s been working on my swing a lot in the off-season and made me not just a dead pull hitter but to hit the ball to the opposite field because that’s where they pitch me a lot. I’m starting to come around and become a complete hitter.”

Another Smith (they are not related) has also been on an offensive tear of late. Catcher Ben Smith (Rockwood Summit) followed Les’ double with a two RBI single for a 5-0 lead that would prove plenty. However, it was two days earlier against North Central Missouri where Ben would put on a power display. Over two games, he smacked two grand slams and a three run homer for an 11 RBI day. Thanks to the firepower, Meramec swept North Central 15-3 and 19-0.

“I just found the stroke, found that one spot, that one swing that gets those kind of results,” said Ben. “I got in a zone and when you get in that zone it’s hard to get out of. It was definitely one of the better days of my career.”

In those dual eruptions over the Pirates, Les Smith was no slacker either - he drilled five doubles for a total of seven RBI’s. Smith has 14 doubles on the season and could pursue the program record of 29 set by Jim Anderson in 1989.

“I was seeing the ball real well on Sunday. It was a great team effort, I think everybody saw the ball pretty well that day. We wanted to come back after that terrible loss on Saturday and make a statement,” said Les Smith.

On the mound, freshman Mike Bibas (Vianney) has been the workhorse of the staff, tossing 32 innings for a 4-2 record and most wins of any pitcher. A pair of relievers have come in and turned the lights out late on opponents’ rallies. Seth Gorman (St. Dominic) is 1-0 with a stellar 2.16 ERA while Adam Kobler (Brentwood) is also 1-0, with a 2.70 ERA.

The Magic host conference foe Forest Park on Thursday, Apr. 1 at 1:00 in doubleheader action before traveling to Crowder College in Neosho, MO on Saturday, Apr. 3 for a twin bill of Region XVI games. April will be a critical month with all games counting toward either the conference or regional standings.

14th Annual Magic Hall Of Fame Induction Set For Apr. 12

The 14th annual Magic Hall Of Fame Induction Banquet will be held Monday, Apr. 12 at 6:30 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Southwest. Inductees are baseball player David Freese, soccer player Paul Zarky, and volleyball/softball player Dianne Dresner.
David Freese is close to a household word in St. Louis these days, at least to baseball fans and followers of the St. Louis Cardinals. Freese was recently named the official starting third baseman for the Cardinals and will be at the hot corner for the season opener Apr. 5 in Cincinnati.

Freese, a Lafayette High grad, played for the Magic in 2003 and ‘04, racking up Region XVI Player Of The Year honors as well as first team All-American. Meramec is also where Freese played third base for the first time.

Following Meramec, David transferred to NCAA Div. I power South Alabama where he starred for two seasons before being drafted into Major League baseball. After toiling for the San Diego Padres Single A farm club for a year, he was traded to the Cardinals for aging center fielder Jim Edmonds. After a superb year at the Cardinals’ AAA Memphis, Freese made the leap to the Majors in 2009 but was shelved much of the season by ankle surgery.

In October, 2009, David joined his friends, teachers, and coaches at Meramec for David Freese Day and graciously signed autographs for two hours non-stop while his parents, Guy and Lynn Freese, stood proudly nearby.

Paul Zarky is a product of the men’s soccer team during the Coach Kevin Kelly era of the late 1980’s. Zarky, a forward, was described by coach Kelly as “a real leader on the team.”

In the fall seasons of 1987 and ’88 Zarky was named All-Conference and All-Region. In ‘88 he was honored with NJCAA All-American, and National Soccer Coaches Association All-American. He was also named All-Midwest.

Meramec opened the door for Zarky to continue his education on scholarship and played for two years at Rockhurst University. Following Rockhurst, he played professional soccer for the St. Louis Ambush. He currently serves as executive director of the Metro Strikers Soccer Club, a youth soccer organization.

Diane Dresner was a two sport standout under coach Celeste Knierim in the 1980’s, playing volleyball and softball. She won All-Conference honors for volleyball in the fall of 1985 and ‘86, and All-Region in ‘86. On the diamond, she was All-Conference, All-Region, and a NJCAA All-American in 1987.

“Diane played both sports at a high level and with passion,” said coach Knierim. “She was always a team leader who led by example and a smile. She was the most mentally tough player I ever had in 30 years and four sports.”

Dresner played first base in softball and set a school record for most put outs with 419 in 1986. As a freshman in ‘86, she hit .321 with 30 RBI’s. In volleyball, she was the team’s leading hitter.