



LUBBOCK CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY LETTERMAN ASSOCIATION



Summer / June 2008

Newsletter

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INAUGURAL TEAM MAKES HISTORY LADY CHAPS SOFTBALL TEAM CLAIMS NATIONAL TITLE

Steven Spielberg couldn't have created a better story and anyone new to the story of the inaugural Lubbock Christian University softball team would think the actual events that took place was a fairy tale with a Walt Disney twist.

Who would believe any story that had a plot involving a first-year softball coach taking over a first-year softball program and leading them to the NAIA National Championship title in their first season?

The story is actually true, as the Lady Chaparrals had a first season that saw storyline after storyline climax until claiming a national title.

It all started out with Marissa Gonzalez pitching a no-hitter in the program's first game in school history. Gonzalez would end up as an All-Region VI player with two additional no-hitters thrown. The team's only senior went 38-9 from the circle with a 1.08 ERA and 341 strikeouts in 290 innings.

After opening the season 4-0, critics thought there would be a reality check for the Lady Chaps as the defending national champion Oklahoma City University Stars cruised into town. The game marked the first Sooner Athletic Conference game for LCU and they went on to defeat the No.1 Stars 9-1 in the conference opener. The Lady Chaps wound up losing the second game, but rebounded the next week with a winning streak that spanned 24 games. In the streak, the Lady Chaps had a streak of five consecutive shutouts and a sequence of nine shutouts over an 11 game span.

On March 19th, the first national ratings were released by the NAIA and the Lady Chaps were rated third in the nation. Ironically, they were scheduled to play California Baptist that same day. Cal Baptist had just been awarded the No. 1 rating. The Lady Chaps won the game 5-3 and moved into the No. 1 rating a week later.

When the Region VI Tournament rolled around, the Lady Chaps were the No. 3 seed in the tournament. They defeated College of the Southwest 12-1 and then shutout No. 6 St. Gregory's 2-0 in 10 innings with a solo home run by Kelly Griego to lead off the tenth inning. LCU closed the day with Griego getting the only RBI in a 1-0 victory over No. 3 Oklahoma City. The Lady Chaps faced OCU again the following day and lost 3-0 before rebounding for a 5-1 win in the decisive championship game over OCU to win the tournament to earn an automatic bid to the National Tournament.



HALL OF HONOR CLASS ANNOUNCED



- HART -



- RICHARDSON -



- RIDDLE -

Lubbock Christian University Athletic Director Paul Hise has announced that the 2008 Letterman Association Hall of Honor Induction Luncheon is scheduled for 11:30 a.m. on June 27th at the Baker Conference Center on the LCU campus.

The banquet will recap the 2007-2008 athletic scene at LCU, and highlighting the event is the induction of three new Hall of Honor members. All three members inducted are former baseball players at LCU. The Hall of Honor has not admitted a member from the Chaps baseball program since 1999.

This season's class will include Keith Hart, Kerry Richardson and Shane Riddle. Each played an integral part in the historical success of LCU baseball. Hart and Richardson are the only players in Lubbock Christian history to achieve the NAIA Player of the Year award, which is the NAIA's top individual honor in baseball. Riddle was one of only two pitchers to ever receive multiple All-American honors in Lubbock Christian history, and he is the program's all-time leader in wins and strikeouts.

The LCU Athletic Department invites all faculty and staff members and former Chaps & Lady Chaps athletes to attend the event. A meal will be provided, and individuals planning on attending are encouraged to RSVP by contacting Joyce Foster at joyce.foster@lcu.edu or 806-720-7276 by June 20th.

Lubbock Christian was placed in Pool D at the NAIA National Tournament and swept their pool play games with wins over Friends University, College of Idaho, Trevecca Nazarene and Olivet Nazarene. The highlight game of pool play was against No. 5 Trevecca Nazarene. The two teams combined for 22 runners stranded (16 by LCU) in the game. The game was finally decided in the tenth inning, as Britiany Johnson threw a wild pitch while attempting to intentionally walk Raquel Hawkins for a third time. It led to a four-run tenth for the Lady Chaps, who prevailed 7-3.

After sweeping Pool Play, the Lady Chaps opened the eight-team double elimination bracket with a contest against Dickinson State. After a 9-0 victory, followed by a 3-1 win over St. Gregory's, the Lady Chaps faced University of Mobile. LCU had momentum through the first half of the game, but then a three hour and 20 minute rain delay turned out to be the turning point of the game, as University of Mobile quickly scored a pair of runs and the Lady Chaps went hitless following the rain delay to fall 2-0.

Heading into the final day of the championships, the Lady Chaps knew they had to win three games to win the title. The day started off with a 4-0 win over No. 2 Point Loma to allow the Lady Chaps to advance to a championship round game against No. 4 University of Mobile. The Rams scored early, taking a 3-0 lead, forcing the Lady Chaps to make a pitching change with Kelly Griego taking the mound to give Gonzalez a rest. Griego was able to quiet the Mobile bats and Ginalce Davis was able to hit a pair of home runs, including a solo shot in the bottom of the sixth inning. Mobile attempted a rally in the seventh, loading the bases with one out. LCU got out of the jam with a ground ball to Davis at second base that led to a 4-3 double play to end the game and force a decisive championship game. In the final game, the Lady Chaps opened the scoring in the second inning with a Daniela Garcia pinch-hit single and bases loaded ground out by Raquel Hawkins. The Rams added a run in the sixth and had the tying run on third base with two outs when Anadys Suarez came up to face Gonzalez. She hit into a 4-3 ground-out to end the game with LCU claiming a 2-1 win.

Shanon Hays, the SAC and Region VI Coach of the Year, received a water cooler full of water in the midst of excitement as the team celebrated their championship by drenching their head coach. The Lady Chaps became just the third team to win the NAIA softball championship by coming through the losers bracket. They finished the season with a 60-10 record.

Raquel Hawkins received the tournament's "Most Valuable Player" honor after batting .500 with 14 hits and 13 runs-batted-in. She also claimed the Easton Second Team All-American honor, which included NCAA athletes. The Monahans native was the Region VI and Sooner Athletic Conference Player of the Year after batting .462 with 15 home runs and 87 runs-batted-in. The three-time SAC Player of the Week recipient led the NAIA in runs-batted-in (87), while ranking second in hits (96) and tied for second in home runs (15).

The Lady Chaps lose just one senior (Gonzalez) this season, so high expectations may be set in 2009. No matter what is in store for next season, no one may duplicate the feats accomplished by LCU this season. No other program has ever won a collegiate national title in their first season of softball and it may be the first of its kind in any major team sport in college sports. It is certainly a season that will not be forgotten.

If you are interested in joining the Lubbock Christian University Letterman Association, please contact LCU Athletic Director Paul Hise or the LCU Athletic Department at 806-720-7276.



WOMEN'S GOLF HAS BEST FINISH EVER

The Lubbock Christian University women's golf team completed their play in the NAIA Championships at the Lake San Marcos Country Club with their best finish in school history, finishing tied for sixth place.

The Lady Chaparrals were participating in just their second championships after finishing last season in 16th place. All five of their individual finishes topped their best individual leader from last season, and combined for a team score of 1303. After opening the 72-hole tournament with a 326 on the par-72 6000-yard layout, the Lady Chaps shot their best round with a 323. They followed with a 326 and closed the tournament with a final round of 328 to finish with an overall tie for sixth place with Lindsey-Wilson University. Despite the 328 being their highest score of the tournament, the total tied for the third best team score for the final round. Oklahoma City University topped the 23-team field with a title winning overall score of 1267.

Individually, the Lady Chaps finished with two players in the top-25 of the leaderboard. Kelly Rainbolt led the Lady Chaps with a score of 323 (80-79-81-83) to finish tied for 21st. Her second round score of 79 was the lowest second round score and it tied Bailey Marquez's closing round of 79 for the best individual round score for the Lady Chaps. Marquez finished with a 324 (82-82-81-79) to finish ranked tied for 24th. Also helping the Lady Chaps to a school-best finish were Brittany Mercer, Christina Watkins and Darcey McRay. Mercer finished tied for 40th place with a 329 (82-81-83-83). Watkins completed play with a total of 333 (87-82-81-33) to tie for 50th and McRay finished tied for 54th with a 335 (82-81-86-86).

The tournament closes out a tremendous season for the LCU women's golf program. The Lady Chaps won their first tournament in school history back in March at the Red River Intercollegiate Tournament and also completed the Region VI Tournament with a program-best second place finish. Individually this season, Head Coach Trent Phillips earned the Sooner Athletic Conference and Region VI Coach of the Year honors, and Rainbolt earned all-region and all-conference honors.

THREE CHAPS SELECTED IN MLB DRAFT

For just the second time in school history, a trio of Lubbock Christian University baseball players were selected in the 2008 Major League Baseball First-Year Player Draft, as Chris Holguin, Buck Britton and Gary Poynter were each selected by big league teams.

Holguin was the first player drafted that appeared in a LCU jersey last season. He was selected in the 14th round (429th overall selection) by the Toronto Blue Jays. The Chaps have never had a player drafted by Toronto, but former Chaps pitcher Brad Cornett signed as a free agent with the Blue Jays in 1992 and pitched in the big leagues. Holguin completed his eligibility this season with an 11-1 record and 3.74 ERA. The Lubbock native and Estacado High School product had a team leading 107 strikeouts in 89 innings pitched. He ranked sixth in the NAIA in wins (11) and ranked tenth in batters struck out per nine innings (10.9). He had a string of six consecutive starts in which he struck out at least eight batters and was named the SAC Pitcher of the Week after shutting out Oklahoma City on April 4th. Holguin ended his LCU career with a 20-3 record in 28 appearances with 188 strikeouts in 167 2/3 innings pitched.

Preseason NAIA All-American Buck Britton was chosen by the Baltimore Orioles in the 35th round as the 1046th overall selection. The Weatherford native completed the 2008 season with LCU hitting .365 with nine homers and 44 runs-batted-in. Primarily used as a lead-off batter, the Chaps second basemen was second on the club in hits (81) and was able to reach base as a lead-off batter 48.4% of the time. Britton was 14 of 18 (77.8%) garnering a run-batted-in with runners in scoring position and less than two outs. In the field, Britton was a Rawlings Gold Glove recipient after a 97.3% fielding percentage. He only committed six errors on the season and he broke a school record for consecutive games with an assist (30), which had previously been held by Gary Hix and Randy Velarde. Britton spent two seasons with the Chaps and combined for a .385 batting average with 18 home runs, 97 runs-batted-in, 155 hits and seven triples in 104 games. Britton is the first player drafted from LCU by the Orioles, but the Britton name is a familiar name in the Orioles organization. Buck's brother Zach was a third round selection by the Orioles in the 2006 draft. Zach currently plays in the Orioles organization with the Class A Delmarva Shorebirds.

Poynter, a junior from Flower Mound, completed his first season with the Chaparrals after transferring in from the University of Arkansas. San Diego drafted him in the 39th round as the 1,185th selection. The 6'3" right handed hurler completed the season ranked second in the NAIA in wins with a 14-2 record. He matched Steve Hunter's 1982 school record of consecutive wins with 12. Poynter made 16 starts during the season and posted a 3.80 ERA with 88 strikeouts in 87 2/3 innings pitched. Opponents batted .239 against Poynter this season. The two-time Sooner Athletic Conference Pitcher of the Week registered the 14th no-hitter in LCU history on February 1st against Mid-America Christian University, which also marked the first LCU no-hitter in SAC play. Poynter is the second Chaps player ever drafted by the Padres. San Diego selected former big leaguer and Lubbock native Steve Watkins in the 16th round of the 1998 draft.

It is the first time three players from LCU have been drafted in the same draft since Kendall Walling (California), Randy Velarde (Chicago AL) and Scott McLanahan (Philadelphia) were selected in the 1985 draft. Since Poynter is a junior, he may opt to return to the Chaps for his senior season and reenter the draft next season. Prior to this season's draft, the last player drafted from LCU was David Wasylak in the 26th round of the 2006 draft. Wasylak was selected by the Chicago White Sox. Twenty-nine players have now been drafted by Major League Baseball teams from LCU. Five of the draft selections have come under the tutelage of Head Coach Nathan Blackwood.

CHAPS BASEBALL WAS GREAT IN '08

This season's Lubbock Christian University baseball team had folks comparing them to the 1983 National Championship team and the heavily talented 1984 team. Some argue that this season's team was the best team in program history.

They might have missed out on an opportunity to advance to the NAIA World Series, but the talent they showed and accolades accomplished might convince folks that this season's Chaps may have been the school's best. Even though a trip to Lewiston was a goal, the Chaps accomplished a lot to be proud of.

The Chaps finished the season 53-4, setting the school's single season mark for winning percentage (93%) and for the least amount of losses (4). Among the 53 victories was a 38-game winning streak, which shattered the prior school record of 28 wins. LCU also tied the school record for the amount of games in which they scored at least ten runs (30). The 38-game winning streak featured many roller-coaster games. Against No. 8 ranked Cumberland University, the Chaps were down to their last strike on three occasions in extra innings, but still found a way to win in walk-off fashion 12-11 (2/22). In another adventure on April 5th against No. 5 Oklahoma City University, the Chaps battled back from a 13-2 deficit with a ten-run sixth inning and eventually won 15-14 in the bottom of the ninth with a two-run ninth inning.

The series sweep of Oklahoma City moved the Chaps atop the NAIA national ratings for the first time since 1984. Lubbock Christian remained in the No. 1 spot through the final ratings of the season.

Lubbock Christian claimed a Sooner Athletic Conference title during the season claiming a remarkable 29-1 conference record. They also claimed a SAC Tournament championship and finished the season as runner-ups in the Region VI Tournament.

The Chaps success stemmed from their balance of offense, pitching, defense and coaching. Head Coach Nathan Blackwood, in his fifth season, surpassed the 200 win plateau and claimed the SAC and the Region VI Coach of the Year. The Chaps offense ranked second in the country in home runs per game (1.9), runs scored per game (10.3), slugging percentage (.664), and third in batting average with a .376.

Senior catcher Karlton Banks might have had the lowest batting average amongst everyday starters, but it showed how strong the Chaps offense was. Banks batted .303 and could have easily been amongst the batting leaders on any other team. Several players on the Chaps roster took their turn leading the team in hitting, but at season's end, it was Armando Dominguez leading the team with a .438 batting average. Following Dominguez was Will Stramp, who had a remarkable season with a .421 batting average. Stramp also led the team in hits (83), homers (24), runs (82) and total bases (169). Nationally, he led the NAIA in runs per game (1.5) and ranked fifth in home runs per game (0.4). He became the fourth player in Chaps history to hit for the cycle, completing the task on January 26th against UT-Brownsville, and also tied school single game records for home runs (3), runs (5) and runs-batted-in (5) this season. Another player that also had a five-hit game was Rob Learned. The Chaps first baseman hit .523 in the postseason with nine home runs and 29 RBI. The postseason performance led to Learned closing the season with a team-leading 89 RBI and a .879 slugging percentage. Tyler Johnson was the team leader in doubles (20) and batted .500 when batting with two outs (35 hits).

The Chaps only offensive member of the All-SAC team was outfielder Chase Robertson. The senior outfielder batted .395 and also received a Rawlings Gold Glove honor with a .986 fielding percentage. The only error he committed came in the final game of the SAC Tournament. Defensively, the Chaps ranked second in the nation in fielding percentage (.969). Buck Britton, a preseason All-American, broke the school record with 30 consecutive games with an assist. The Chaps second baseman also ranked second on the club in hits with 81 and claimed a Rawlings Gold Glove award.

The pitching staff for LCU was stellar and ranked fourth in the NAIA in strikeouts per game (8.1). Gary Poynter, a junior transfer from Arkansas, completed his first season with the Chaparrals claiming First Team All-American honors. The 6'3" right handed hurler ranked second in the NAIA in wins with a 14-2 record. He matched Steve Hunter's 1982 school record of consecutive wins with 12. Poynter made 16 starts during the season and posted a 3.80 ERA with 88 strikeouts in 87 2/3 innings pitched. Opponents batted .239 against Poynter this season. The two-time Sooner Athletic Conference Pitcher of the Week registered the 14th no-hitter in LCU history on February 1st against Mid-America Christian University, which also marked the first LCU no-hitter in SAC play. Also solid was Chris Holguin, a senior from Estacado High School. Holguin completed his eligibility this season with an 11-1 record and 3.74 ERA. The All-American pitcher had a team leading 107 strikeouts in 89 innings pitched. He ranked sixth in the NAIA in wins (11) and ranked tenth in batters struck out per nine innings (10.9). He had a string of six consecutive starts in which he struck out at least eight batters and was named the SAC Pitcher of the Week after shutting out Oklahoma City on April 4th. Holguin ended his LCU career with a 20-3 record in 28 appearances with 188 strikeouts in 167 2/3 innings pitched. A surprise on the staff was Tanner Vickers, who surged as the season developed. The Coronado product led the team with a 2.79 ERA and went 10-1 with 83 strikeouts in 71 innings. He also led the team holding opponents to a .220 batting average and averaging 10.9 strikeouts per nine innings pitched.

The Chaps lose seniors Britton, Ryan Burke, Holguin, Banks, Robertson, Billy Jordan and Richard Navarrete this season. Their talent will be missed, but the Chaps plan to continue as a strong ranked program in the NAIA for 2009. The 2009 season will see a change to the NAIA postseason. Forty-five teams will qualify for nine sectional tournaments with the tournament winners advancing to Lewiston, Idaho, eliminating the super-regional tournament. The new format will aim to place members from the same conference in different sectional tournaments to allow conferences with several highly ranked teams the opportunity to have more than one representative in Lewiston. As an example, the two at-large bids from the Sooner Athletic Conference would likely play in separate sectional tournaments. The prior set up was set to take the best among geographical regions instead of the best ten teams based on overall ratings.