



## Great Northwest Athletic Conference

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### 2014 GNAC Baseball Preseason Report 1 (Jan. 23, 2014)

#### 2014 Preseason Coaches' Poll

Rk.	School	2013 Records	Pts.
1.	Western Oregon (4)	34-20, 24-8 (1st)	24
2.	Central Washington (1)	30-24, 19-13 (2nd)	21
3.	Montana State Billings	21-27, 17-14 (3rd)	14
4.	Northwest Nazarene	21-28, 12-20 (4th)	8
	Saint Martin's	9-39, 7-24 (5th)	8

\*Note: First-place votes in parentheses

#### TEAM CAPSULES

##### WESTERN OREGON Wolves – Preseason Rk: 1

**Head Coach:** Kellen Walker, Point Loma Nazarene '06 (34-20, 1 year)

**Assistants:** Miles Kizer, Mike McInerney

**2013 Record:** 34-20

**Conference:** 24-8, 1st

**Returning Letter Winners:** 13

**Returning Starters (4 position, 2 pitchers):** Spenser Watkins (P, 6-1, 185, Sr., 8-6, 3.19 ERA, 1<sup>st</sup> team GNAC); Daniel McNabb (OF, 5-9, 175, Sr., .376, 1 hr, 35 rbi, 2<sup>nd</sup> team ABCA, Daktronics & NCBWA, 1<sup>st</sup> team GNAC); Tim Rausch (OF, 5-10, 190, Jr., .353, 4 hr, 38 rbi, 2<sup>nd</sup> team GNAC); Chris Bradshaw (OF, 5-11, 195, Sr., .319, 0 hr, 12 rbi, 2<sup>nd</sup> team GNAC); Garrett Harpole (3B, 6-1, 190, Jr., .178, 2 hr, 14 rbi); Gary Steindorf (P, 6-4, 220, Jr., 6-4, 4.20 ERA).

**Key Returnees (25 or more at bats, 15 or more IP):** Kody Stone (P, 5-11, 200, Sr., 1-1, 3.10 ERA, 2<sup>nd</sup> team Daktronics & NCBWA, 1<sup>st</sup> team GNAC); Will Chavarría (C, 5-10, 195, Sr., .275, 0 hr, 5 rbi); Marcus Lefton (OF, 6-1, 195, Sr., .259, 0 hr, 2 rbi); Josh Solemsaas (SS, 5-9, 165, Sr., .266, 0 hr, 3 rbi); Vince Ampí (OF, 6-1, 205, Sr., .121, 1 hr, 5 rbi); Jacob Whisler (INF, 5-8, 145, Jr., .179, 0 hr, 3 rbi); Jesse Pratt (P, 6-5, 205, Jr., 2-0, 6.14).

**Top Transfers:** TBA.

#### 2013 SEASON

The Wolves continued their tradition of excellence in baseball last season, cruising to a 12th-straight GNAC title and winning the inaugural conference tournament after earning hosting privileges by virtue of having the best regular-season record.

Six of the Wolves' starters hit better than .300, as WOU approached the standard mark of success as a team with an average of .294. First-team all-GNAC senior shortstop Blake Miller hit .372 with three home runs and a team-high 49 RBI, and his 18 doubles paced the conference.

WOU lost six of its first seven games during the preseason last year, but recovered to finish the season 33-14 including two wins over Central Washington on the final day of the season to grab the conference title.

Miller and GNAC Pitcher of the Year A.J. Burke were both selected in the 2013 Major League Baseball draft, leaving major spots to fill for the Wolves in 2014.

#### IMPACT PLAYERS

Spenser Watkins was WOU's No. 2 starter a season ago, and led the GNAC with eight wins while posting a solid 3.19 ERA in 84 2/3 innings of work. Backing Watkins last season was the league's best closer in Kody Stone, who notched 13 saves and a 3.10 ERA in 20 1/3 innings. Stone earned first-team all-GNAC honors while holding opponents to a .214 batting average and allowing just 15 hits – all singles – in his 20 appearances.

Daniel McNabb was picked as the first-team all-conference designated hitter after leading the Wolves with a .376 batting average while driving in 35 runs. Tim Rausch and Scott David were two of Walker's most consistent players last season, batting .351 and .342 respectively and combining to steal 17 bases. The junior-senior duo will return to the Wolves' outfield this season after each earning second-team all-conference honors and not hitting into a single double play in 2013.

The return of senior Chris Bradshaw means the Wolves welcome back their entire starting outfield from 2013, as he batted .319 with 14 doubles and 42 runs scored in 48 starts.

Another valuable arm that figures to bump to the No. 2 role in WOU's rotation is junior Gary Steindorf, who compiled a 6-4 record and 4.20 ERA in 14 starts last season.

#### KEY FACTOR

With the return of four .300 hitters from a season ago, WOU's offense shouldn't suffer too much despite losing its top-two RBI men in Miller and Matt Nylen (49 and 44, respectively). The 3-4 punch in the batting order could be tough to replace, as Rausch figures to fill one of those spots after a team-high .552 slugging percentage, four home runs and 38 RBI a season ago.

The Wolves led the conference in runs scored last year with 316, and stole 23 more bases than the next-closest team with 64 on the season. With Miller and Nylen accounting for more than half of those steals (39) and nearly a third of the runs (91), WOU will turn to its veteran outfield to sustain its threat on the base paths this season.

On the mound, the Wolves will again have high expectations for Watkins as a starter and for Stone to close out games, but without the arm of Burke, who averaged 7 innings per start, a solid compliment to Watkins appears to be the Wolves' biggest necessity heading into the season.

## SEASON OUTLOOK

Not surprisingly, WOU was given the nod as the preseason favorite after receiving 4-of-5 votes in the preseason coaches' poll.

The Wolves kick off the season by playing six games in the first 10 days in California, before a road trip to Idaho to face NAIA powerhouse Lewis-Clark State to close out February.

WOU begins conference play on the road against the No. 2 team in the preseason poll, Central Washington with four games scheduled for Mar. 1-2.

## CENTRAL WASHINGTON Wildcats – Preseason Rk: 2

**Head Coach:** Desi Storey, Central Washington '94 (471-555-1, 22 years)

**Assistants:** Ken Wilson, Rob Hippi, Scott Wilson, Craig Driver

**2013 Record:** 30-24

**Conference:** 19-13, 2<sup>nd</sup>

**Returning Letter Winners:** 18

**Returning Starters (5 position, 2 pitchers)** Skye Adams (P, 6-0, 195, Sr., 6-2, 3.80 ERA, 1<sup>st</sup> team GNAC); Stuart Fewel (P, 6-5, 225, R-Sr., 5-4, 4.82 ERA, 2<sup>nd</sup> team GNAC); Kasey Bielec (INF/C, 5-11, 205, Jr., .320, 2 hr, 25 rbi, 2<sup>nd</sup> team GNAC); Joel Johnson (SS/2B, 6-1, 175, Sr., .324, 0 hr, 26 rbi, 2<sup>nd</sup> team GNAC); Ethan Sterkel (OF, 6-2, 210, Sr., .325, 2 hr, 16 rbi, HM GNAC); Joe Castro (OF, 5-8, Sr., 160, .282, 1 hr, 19 rbi).

**Key Returnees (25 or more at bats, 15 or more IP):** Joe Arlt (P, 6-3, 205, Sr., 3-0, 3.69 ERA, HM GNAC); Justen Weigel (SS, 5-10, 180, Sr., .320, 2 hr, 14 rbi); Willie Davies (P, 6-0, 200, R-Sr., 1-2, 2.70 ERA); Scott Stone (UT, 6-5, 200, Sr., .291, 2 hr, 12 rbi); Eddie Malone (1B, 6-0, 200, R-Sr., .306, 0 hr, 11 rbi); Sam Williams (C, 6-0, 190, Sr., .286, 0 hr, 7 rbi); J. V. Estella (2B, 5-8, 200, Sr., .233, 0 hr, 3 rbi); Max Dickinson (P, 5-10, 170, R-Jr., 3-0, 5.33 ERA); Davis Engel (P, 5-11, 160, R-Jr., 2-2, 6.00 ERA); Spencer Hannah (OF, 5-9, 170, R-Sr., .189, 0 hr, 9 rbi); Jeff Gonzales (P, 5-11, 175, Sr., 1-2, 8.82 ERA).

**Top Transfers:** Zach Reay (C/IF, Jr., Blackfoot, ID – Treasure Valley CC, 1<sup>st</sup> team NWAACC, .333, 2 hr, 20 rbi); Jesse White (C, Jr., Salinas, CA – Monterey Peninsula, 1<sup>st</sup> team CCCAA, .275, 1 hr, 27 rbi); Kyle Baumgartner (OF, Jr., Enumclaw, WA – Edmonds CC, 2<sup>nd</sup> team NWAACC, .321, 0 hr, 11 rbi); Josh Potter (1B, Sr., Des Moines, WA – Campbellsville, .260, 0 hr, 15 rbi); Jake Levin (1B, So., Redmond, WA – Chapman (2012 stats) 1-for-8, 8 games); Eric Tinnell (IF, R-Sr., Ephrata, WA – Western Oregon (2012 stats) 2-for-13, 10 games); Jaykob Sells (OF, R-Jr., Mountlake Terrace, WA – Everett CC); Stephen McElroy (OF, Jr., Petaluma, CA – Santa Rosa JC); Jeff Beckman (C/IF, Jr., Renton, WA – Edmonds CC, .244, 4 hr, 12 rbi); Brandon Williams (P, R-Jr., Auburn, WA – Mount Hood CC, 5-2, 3.73 ERA); Ryan Rothing (P, Jr., Belgrade, MT – Blue Mountain CC, 1-8, 4.38 ERA); Cameron Harper (OF, Jr., Las Vegas, NV – Central Arizona); Nolan Amundson (P, R-Jr., Boise, ID – Lower Columbia CC, 7-4, 3.41 ERA).

## 2013 SEASON

The highlight of CWU's 2013 season was GNAC Player of the Year Kyle Sani's NCAA-leading 18 home runs and GNAC-high 58 RBI as the Wildcats finished second to Western Oregon last year. The senior catcher was one of nine CWU regulars to hit at least .300, as Sani hit .347 while leading the team in runs (42), doubles (14), triples (3), on-base percentage (.421), and sacrifice flies (4).

The Wildcats' corner infielders – Justin Peterson at first base and Marc Garza at third – were also first-team all-conference selections, with the latter leading the team with a .360 batting average.

Kramer Ferrell, who transferred after one season at CWU, earned GNAC Freshman of the Year honors after inserting himself into the Wildcats' starting lineup and batting .352 with four home runs and 17 RBI. Ferrell also scored 32 runs and stole six bases without grounding into a single double play in his first collegiate season.

Similar to WOU, the Wildcats struggled at the beginning of the season, dropping their first five games and six of eight overall in an early-year trip to California. CWU embarked on an eight-game winning streak that spanned March 2 – 19, during which it outscored opponents 55-24.

## IMPACT PLAYERS

On the mound, Skye Adams logged a 6-2 record with a 3.80 ERA in 64 innings, en-route to first-team all-conference honors as a junior. Second-team all-conference selection Stuart Fewel was the Wildcats' workhorse in 2013, pitching 74 2/3 innings with a 5-4 record and a 4.82 ERA. Joe Arlt, is another top

returner for CWU, as he posted a perfect 3-0 record with a 3.69 ERA and 27 strikeouts in 39 innings.

The return of Joel Johnson and Kasey Bielec keeps the Wildcats' double-play combination intact, as the middle infielders were both second-team all-conference picks after hitting .324 and .320, respectively, in 2013.

A pair of solid outfielders in Ethan Sterkel and Joe Castro also return for Storey's Wildcats, the former batting .329 and playing in all 48 games with 46 starts as a junior in 2013. Sterkel logged 55 hits with two home runs and 16 RBI, while scoring 26 times and stealing a pair of bases. Castro, meanwhile, was second only to Sani in runs scored with 34, and was successful on 11-of-14 stolen base attempts to lead the team.

Justen Weigel, another strong infielder in 2013, batted .320 in 33 starts for CWU and connected for a pair of home runs and 14 RBI in limited playing time. Willie Davies was CWU's most reliable arm out of the bullpen last season, posting an impressive 2.70 ERA in 19 relief appearances as a junior in 2013.

#### **KEY FACTOR**

While replacing Sani's offensive output and presence at the catcher position will be no easy task the Wildcats have their middle infield and entire outfield back from last season.

Further, the formidable trio of all-conference seniors that figures to comprise CWU's rotation on the mound leaves the Wildcats well-stocked for the four-game series format of the conference schedule.

A solid transfer class should bolster CWU's lineup as well, with first-team NWAACC catcher Zach Reay bringing last season's .333 batting average, two home runs and 20 RBI to the team. Kyle Baumgartner, another 2013 NWAACC all-star, batted .321 a season ago for Edmonds CC, and catcher Jesse White was a first-team all CCCAA pick at Monterey Valley College with a .275 batting average and 27 RBI. Jeff Beckman, a transfer from Edmonds CC could serve as a power source for the Wildcats this season, as he tallied four home runs and a dozen RBI in 2013.

The Wildcats were the only team to hit above .300 last season, as their 557 hits were the most in the GNAC. Those figures appear to be sustainable for CWU, with more than half of it's .300 hitters returning this season. Additionally, the 2013 Wildcats had a knack for the timely hit, driving in a GNAC-high 123 runners with two outs, which is a mentality that certainly plays towards the 2014 team's advantage.

#### **SEASON OUTLOOK**

CWU was picked to finish second in the 2014 preseason coaches' poll, but only by three total points behind Western Oregon. The Wildcats will have a first shot at redemption for last season's loss to the Wolves in the GNAC tournament, as the two teams are set to kick off GNAC play with four games on March 1-2 in Ellensburg.

#### **MSU BILLINGS Yellowjackets – Preseason Rk: 3**

**Head Coach:** Rob Bishop, Jamestown '94 (61-80-1, 3 years)

**Assistants:** Chris Martin, Jason Oatman

**2013 Record:** 21-27

**Conference:** 17-14, 3rd

**Returning Letter Winners:** 10

**Returning Starters (3 position, 2 pitchers):** Brady Muller (P, 6-1, 165, Jr., 6-4, 3.47 ERA, 1<sup>st</sup> team GNAC); Drew Fosnes (C/OF, 6-0, 195, Sr., .335, 7 hr, 37 rbi, HM NCBWA, 1<sup>st</sup> team GNAC); Brody Miller (IF, 5-8, 165, Jr., .350, 4 hr, 41 rbi, 2<sup>nd</sup> team GNAC); Joe Andriolo (P, 6-0, 185, Sr., 2-6, 5.62 ERA); Colter Sternhagen (IF, 6-0, 185, Jr., .252, 6 hr, 35 rbi).

**Key Returnees (25 or more at bats, 15 or more IP):** Brad Birch (IF, 6-2, 200, Sr., .288, 3 hr, 14 rbi); Steven DeYoung (C/OF, 6-0, 195, Sr., .157, 5 rbi, 10 runs); Matt Eames (P, 6-4, 200, Sr., 2013 redshirt); Tanner Watson (P, 6-2, 230, So., 1-4, 6.94 ERA); Lee Busto (P, 6-1, 150, R-So., 1-0, 6.45 ERA).

**Top Transfers:** Drew Christina (P, 6-2, 180, Jr., Walla Walla, WA – Walla Walla CC, 1<sup>st</sup> team NWAACC, 7-2, 2.25 ERA); Trevor Nix (C, 5-11, 180, Jr., Tigard, OR – Linn-Benton CC, 1<sup>st</sup> team NWAACC, .348, 3 hr, 26 rbi); Conner Holbrook (C, 5-8, 170, Jr., Walla Walla, WA – Walla Walla CC, 2<sup>nd</sup> team NWAACC, .323, 0 hr, 17 rbi); Jake Campeau (P, 6-5, 215, Jr., Walla Walla, WA – Walla Walla CC, 2<sup>nd</sup> team NWAACC, 6-4, 4.44 ERA); Trevor Johnson (P, 5-11, 190, Jr., Great Falls, MT – Miles CC, All-Mon-Dak, 6-2, 3.96 ERA); Jake Mills (P, 6-2, 205, Jr., Burley, ID, Miles CC, All-Mon-Dak, 6-0, 3.03 ERA); Conor Webster (P, Jr., Cody, WY – Miles CC, All-Mon-Dak, 5-1, 2.78 ERA); Bret Bitow (UTL, Jr., Puyallup, WA – Lower Columbia College, .254, 2 hr, 22 rbi); Bret Christina (IF, Jr., Walla Walla, WA – Walla Walla CC, .303, 0 hr, 2 rbi); Mario Venturini (P, 6-2, 205, Jr., Kalispell, MT – Miles CC, 2012 redshirt); Luke Reinschmidt (OF, 5-11, 173, So., Billings, MT – Wayland Baptist, 11 games, 1 ab); Kevin Toon (IF, 6-2, 170, So., Walla Walla, WA – Walla Walla CC, .264, 0 hr, 14 rbi); Matt Benner (IF, 5-10, 195, R-Jr., Mead, WA – Big Bend CC, .241, 0 hr, 6 rbi in 2012).

#### **2013 SEASON**

Finishing just two games behind second-place Central Washington with a conference record of 17-14, MSU Billings has shown marked improvement in each of its three seasons as a member of the GNAC. The above-.500 conference record last year was a program first

for fourth-year coach Rob Bishop, whose team finished 21-27 overall on the year.

Senior Colby Robison was one of the Yellowjackets' best hitters in 2013, as his .348 batting average was seventh-best in the GNAC. Robison also led the team in home runs with eight and drove in 52 runs for MSUB.

Senior starting pitcher Samuel Paterson was a valuable asset on the mound, eating up 66 2/3 innings while striking out 48 with an ERA of 4.86.

An early-season lull hurt MSUB's overall record, as the Yellowjackets lost nine in a row and 13-of-14 throughout the month of February. A four-game conference winning streak, followed by three straight victories over CWU to close the regular season however contributed to MSUB's winning record in GNAC play.

### **IMPACT PLAYERS**

Of MSUB's returning players, one of the most prolific hitters is Brody Miller, who batted .350 with four home runs and 41 RBI a season ago, while finishing second only to Robison in hits with 63. Miller displayed patience at the plate, drawing 22 walks and posting an on-base percentage of .423.

Drew Fosnes is another key returnee for the 'Jackets, as he hit .335 with a team-high .615 slugging percentage thanks in large part to seven home runs and 25 total extra-base hits. Fosnes drove in 37 and scored 37 runs, and his 99 total bases were second only to Robison's total of 103 as he garnered first-team all-conference recognition.

MSUB welcomes back a rock at the hot corner in Colter Sternhagen, who started 45 games at third base as a sophomore in 2013. Sternhagen provided power for the 'Jackets as well, launching six home runs while driving in 35 and scoring 29, and his four sacrifice flies tied for the team lead.

Tanner Watson, who was a dual threat as a first baseman and left-handed pitcher, started 17 games in the field and logged 36 1/3 innings from the rubber in 2013. Another player who saw limited time but made the most out of it a year ago is Brad Birch, who notched 21 hits in 73 at-bats while starting 22 games as an infielder. Birch also contributed three home runs and drove in 14, which should help his case for an increased role in 2014.

On the mound, MSUB returns one of the top arms in the conference in first-team all-GNAC selection Brady Muller. As a junior, the left-hander struck out 64 batters in 80 1/3 innings, while holding opponents to a .230 batting average and posting a 3.47 ERA. The Yellowjackets also return starter Joe Andriolo, who

struck out 30 in 56 innings and tossed one complete game as a junior in 2013.

### **KEY FACTOR**

With one of the largest transfer classes across the conference, MSUB looks to bolster its lineup and add depth that could have a major impact on the team's performance this season. Namely, the addition of first-team NWAACC pitcher Drew Christina and second-team NWAACC pitcher Jake Campeau – both from Walla Walla CC – should give the Yellowjackets more flexibility on the mound.

The loss of top reliever Travis Vincent, who tossed 28 2/3 innings of relief while striking out 19 against just four walks and a 1.88 ERA, along with the departure of utility player Bobby Ragasa took away all five of the saves MSUB received in 2013. With new arms like Christina and Campeau, along with all-Mon-Dak conference selections in Trevor Johnson, Jake Mills, and Conor Webster from Miles CC, MSUB should be well-stocked to handle the routine of four games in two days in conference play.

While the strength of its pitching took a major leap with the bulky transfer class, the Yellowjackets also added two big bats in first-team NWAACC catcher Trevor Nix and second-team NWAACC catcher Conner Holbrook. Nix hit .348 with three home runs and 26 RBI a season ago, while Holbrook batted .323 and drove in 17. The two figure to adequately fill the void left by 2013 senior regular backstop Orrin Pyrah, who started 35 games last year.

### **SEASON OUTLOOK**

While the 'Jackets have been picked to finish third in this season's preseason coaches' poll, Bishop's work pulling from the junior college ranks could be what it takes to close the two-game deficit from last year's finish behind CWU.

The Yellowjackets kick-off a lengthy road trip on Valentine's Day against Lewis-Clark Stat in Lewiston, as MSUB is not scheduled to play at its home field Dehler Park until March 22 against Central Washington.

### **NORTHWEST NAZARENE Crusaders – Preseason Rk: T-4**

**Head Coach:** Rocke Musgraves, Arizona '94 (First year, 588-275 overall, 14 years)

**Assistants:** Brian Solemsaas, Jason Krohn

**2013 Record:** 21-28

**Conference:** 12-20, 4th

**Returning Letter Winners: 10**

**Returning Starters (1 pitcher, 1 position):** Aaron Vaughn (P, 5-11, 185, Jr., 4-5, 6.68 ERA, 2<sup>nd</sup> team GNAC); Sam Cook (IF, Sr., .289, 2 hr, 23 rbi, 2<sup>nd</sup> team GNAC).

**Key Returnees (25 or more at bats, 15 or more IP):**

Tyler Marsh (P/INF, So., .292, 0 hr, 3 rbi, HM GNAC); Kaleb DeHaas (3B, 5-11, 200, Jr., .172, 3 hr, 13 rbi, HM GNAC); Tate Glasgow (C/OF, Jr., .306, 1 hr, 7 rbi); Ryan Kuhn (P, Sr., 2-1, 4.34 ERA); Andrew Groves (P, Jr., 2-2, 5.59 ERA); Nick Bland (P, So., 4-3, 5.70 ERA); Jeremy Richardson (OF, Sr., .224, 0 hr, 3 rbi); Jake Ferdinand (OF/P, Sr., .189, 0 hr, 2 rbi).

**Top Transfers:** Ryan Johnson (OF, Jr., Boise, ID – Treasure Valley CC, .288, 1 hr, 11 rbi); Kyle Thomson (IF, Jr., Enumclaw, WA – Yakima Valley CC); Ben Cicero (IF, Jr., Bothell, WA – Tacoma CC, .325, 0 hr, 25 rbi); Anthony Flatt (IF/C, Jr., Mill Creek, WA – Bellevue College, .242, 1 hr, 23 rbi); Jake Reppert (P, Jr., Monroe, WA – Bellevue College, 5-5, 3.09 ERA); Colben McGuire (P, Jr., Idaho Falls – Lane CC, 0-5, 2.74 ERA).

**2013 SEASON**

First-team all-GNAC outfielder Logan Parker paced Northwest Nazarene with a .333 batting average in 2013, as the Crusaders finished GNAC play in fourth place with a conference record of 12-20. Parker started 45 games and led the team with 64 hits, 81 total bases and struck out just 11 times in 204 plate appearances.

The Crusaders' other three .300-plus hitters – Jamie Mitchell, Charlie Gorzo and Fernando Robles – graduated as well, leaving plenty of jobs open for new faces this season. Mitchell hit .311 and drove in 27 runs with 56 hits, Gorzo batted .302, just ahead of Robles' .300 average, and the latter two each launched four home runs.

Greg Hata, the team leader in home runs with five, was another key senior presence in the outfield for the 2013 Crusaders.

**IMPACT PLAYERS**

Returning to NNU's roster this season is senior infielder Sam Cook, who garnered second-team all-GNAC honors last season after hitting .289 with two home runs and 23 RBI. The reliable first baseman started 46 games in 2013 and made just six errors in almost 400 chances, and struck out just 17 times in 189 plate appearances.

The Crusaders' top returning starting pitcher is Aaron Vaughn, who struck out 44 batters against just 13 walks in 66 innings pitched during his junior campaign in 2013. Vaughn logged two complete games in 11 starts, earning second-team all-conference honors for his effort.

Tate Glasgow displayed promise in limited playing time as a sophomore, collecting 15 hits in 49 at-bats including one home run and seven RBI. Starting 14 games primarily towards the end of the season, look

for the utility player to pick up a more regular role this season.

Another player who showed power potential last season was Kaleb DeHaas, who contributed three home runs and 13 RBI in 87 at bats as a sophomore.

Tyler Marsh showed value as a position player and a pitcher, picking up seven hits in 24 at-bats and also striking out 37 batters in 40 2/3 innings on the mound.

Ryan Kuhn, Nick Bland, and Andrew Groves provide the Crusaders with three more reliable arms that saw plenty of action a season ago. Kuhn recorded 15 strikeouts and a 4.34 ERA in 18 2/3 innings, Bland struck out 34 in 36 1/3 innings, and Groves struck out 30 in 37 innings while leading the team with six saves in 2013.

**KEY FACTOR**

Rocke Musgraves, who brings a wealth of coaching experience to the Crusaders' program this season, has logged nearly 600 victories in 14 seasons as a collegiate head coach. Previously at Louisiana State University Shreveport at the NAIA level, Musgraves compiled a record of 588-275 while reaching the NAIA World Series in 2003, 2011 and 2012.

With a losing record a season ago, a new mindset could be just what it takes to turn the NNU program around. Musgraves' experience and history of success, along with a solid transfer class should help jump-start the Crusaders' lineup.

Jake Reppert brings a solid left-handed arm to the Crusaders' rotation after posting a 3.09 ERA at Bellevue Community College last season. Colben McGuire, a junior transfer from Lane CC, ate up NWAACC hitters with 57 strikeouts in 59 innings and a 2.74 ERA. Both should assume significant roles on the mound for the Crusaders this season.

**SEASON OUTLOOK**

Finishing tied for fourth with Saint Martin's in the preseason coaches' poll, NNU will look to take GNAC competition by surprise with a revitalized mentality and several key transfers who should start right away.

NNU begins its 2014 campaign with a venture west to Honolulu to challenge Hawaii Pacific in a three-game set Feb. 7-10. The Crusaders' first GNAC test will come at home against Saint Martin's on Feb. 28, and NNU plays its entire schedule in the month of April on its home field in Nampa.

#### **SAINT MARTIN'S Saints – Preseason Rk: T-4**

**Head Coach:** Ken Garland, Willamette '82 (91-155, 5 years; Overall, 11 years, 163-317-1)

**Assistants:** Alex Bailey, Josh Fulton, Alex DeAngelis

**2013 Record:** 9-39

**Conference:** 7-24, 5th

**Returning Letter Winners:** 16

**Returning Starters (5 position, 3 pitchers):** Chandler Tracy (C, 6-2, 215, Jr., .301, 12 hr, 29 rbi, 2<sup>nd</sup> team GNAC); Travis Shaw (IF, 5-11, 190, Jr., .331, 1 hr, 25 rbi); Alex Bielaski (OF, 6-0, 215, Sr., .234, 1 hr, 19 rbi); Spencer Dodd (1B, 6-1, 200, Sr., .221, 1 hr, 4 rbi); Chris Womac (OF, 6-0, 175, Sr., .260, 0 hr, 4 rbi); Josh Moss (P, 6-3, 220, Jr., 1-8, 6.95 ERA); Zach Carter (P, 6-1, 185, Jr., 1-9, 6.59 ERA); Brad Banker (P, 5-11, 180, Jr., 1-5, 5.26 ERA).

**Key Returnees (25 or more at bats, 15 or more IP):** Luke Besel (3B, 6-0, 200, Sr., .205, 1 hr, 6 rbi); Anthony LaDue (P, 6-1, 170, Sr., 0-3, 5.92 ERA); Chase DeCoito (P, 6-0, 190, Jr., 1-6, 9.89 ERA); Blake Lord (IF, 6-0, 170, So., .227, 0 hr, 4 rbi); Josh Sontag (IF/P, 6-2, 205, So., .200, 0 hr, 6 rbi); Scott Campagna (OF, 5-11, 175, So., .220, 0 hr, 3 rbi); Stephen Mahnken (OF, 6-0, 190, Jr., .174, 0 hr, 5 rbi); Jake Huskey (IF, 5-10, 165, So., .160, 0 hr, 2 rbi).

**Top Transfers:** None.

#### **2013 SEASON**

A tough 2013 season for the Saints was highlighted by one of the best individual offensive outputs in the GNAC in sophomore Chandler Tracy, who hit 12 home runs and batted .301 in 2013.

First-team all-GNAC selection Bobby Twedt was another bright spot for SMU, as he led the team with a .333 batting average and drove in 23 runs in his final collegiate campaign. On the mound, Brendan Jeffers led the way for the Saints with 72.1 innings pitched and a 4.85 ERA.

The Saints could not overcome 14 losses to start the 2013 conference slate, but ended the year on a high note as they took 3-of-4 from Northwest Nazarene on the last weekend of the season.

#### **IMPACT PLAYERS**

Tracy returns in 2014 with big time power potential, as he played in all 48 of the Saints' games last season starting 47. Tracy also led the team in runs scored with 32, slugging percentage at .595, and notched a solid on-base percentage of .392.

Another key returnee for Ken Garland's squad is Travis Shaw, who batted .331 in 45 starts a season ago and finished second to Twedt in hits with 53. Shaw led the team with a .420 on-base percentage, scored 25 runs and contributed one home run and 25 RBI as a sophomore last season.

Alex Bielaski and Spencer Dodd are two more regulars from 2013 who will step into leadership roles as seniors this season. Bielaski homered once and drove in 19 runs while playing nearly spotless defense in the outfield, making 93-of-94 plays last season. Dodd also contributed a long ball for the Saints in 2013 and played equally impressive defense at first base as he handled 214-of-217 chances cleanly.

Another returnee in the outfield with potential for more offensive output is Luke Besel, who homered once and scored eight times in 25 starts for the Saints last season.

On the rubber, Brad Banker returns for his junior season after tossing 49 2/3 innings and logging a 5.26 ERA in seven spot starts. SMU also welcomes back two of its consistent starters from last season in Zach Carter and Josh Moss. Carter ate up 68 1/3 innings in 11 starts, while Moss led the staff with 54 strikeouts in 68 2/3 innings and had one complete game.

Chase DeCoito proved to be a valuable asset in relief, as he logged 33 2/3 innings in 23 appearances and also recorded one complete game in a pair of spot starts for the Saints.

#### **KEY FACTOR**

Garland's 2014 squad features strength in numbers in terms of upperclassmen, with 16 total juniors and senior set to suit up this spring. The Saints will count on the production of Tracy to carry the offense, and the maturity of the core of six seniors to turn around a disappointing finish from a season ago.

SMU will have to improve its patience at the plate as well, as the Saints struck out more than twice as often as they drew walks in 2013. The Saints were solid defensively as their .952 team fielding percentage was second-best in the GNAC, but improvement is needed upon SMU's offensive output of just 3.71 runs per game.

#### **SEASON OUTLOOK**

The Saints were slated to finish tied with Northwest Nazarene for fourth in the preseason coaches' poll. SMU kicks off its 2014 campaign at home against Puget Sound in a three-game set on Feb. 8-9. The Saints face a tough test towards the end of the season with a road trip to Billings followed by a trip to Monmouth in late April, before closing the season against Central Washington at home on May 2-3.