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Sunday, Apr 08, 2007

Notebook: Stratford taking a liking to the long ball

Opposing pitchers might want to do some extra neck stretches before they play Stratford.

Because at the rate the Eagles are hitting home runs, pitchers could get whiplash watching the ball fly past them.

Stratford (11-3, 4-0 GISA Region 2-AAA) has hit 14 home runs in 14 games and have five players with two or more home runs.

"It's great to have guys that can hit (home runs), but you don't want the team to live on them," Stratford head coach Jeff Treadway said. "We have hit some home runs at important times."

Columbus State-signee Cam Fulcher leads the team with five home runs and is averaging one per every 8.8 at bats.

Tyler Brown, who has signed with Gordon College, has three home runs and leads the team with a .380 batting average.

Colby Collins, Franky Davis and Carson Schilling, a Georgia signee, each have two home runs.

But while the bats have been hot, Stratford's pitching shouldn't be overlooked.

Fulcher leads the team with a 0.72 ERA and has allowed three earned runs in 29 innings pitched. Brown is 4-0 with a 1.35 ERA. Justin Ainsworth and Schilling both have sub-2.50 ERAs.

"(Fulcher and Brown) have been very good," Treadway said. "Those two have been very tough. The surprise has been Justin Ainsworth. He's given us a couple of starts and couple of wins."

Stratford is currently ranked No. 1 in the GISA Class AAA coaches poll.

CHANGE OF HEART

Washington County head football coach Joel Ingram thought he would be in the market for a new special teams coordinator when current coach Tommy Howell accepted the head coaching job at Spencer.

But Howell decided not to take the job after Spencer principal Issac Neal announced his resignation recently.

"He took it and then declined it," Ingram said. "He didn't feel comfortable with the situation and did what was best for his family."

Ingram said he was "thrilled" to have Howell remain at WACO but added he wants assistant coaches who want to be a head coach in future.

"When you're at a program like ours, you're always going to have assistants that get interviews," he said. "You always want people aspiring to be head coaches. Eventually, we'll lose coordinators and assistants. But I'm very, very happy to have him back. You want a lot of continuity in your program."

HEAVY LIFTING

Fitzgerald recently won the state weightlifting championship.

Dion Ross won the 141-150 weight class with 935 pounds. His 285 clean lift was the best in his weight class and he tied for top bench press with 275 pounds.

Senior Jarrell Paschal finished second in the 171-180 weight class.

Washington County finished third and claimed the top two heavyweight spots with Shaquan Hicks and Andre Reaves.

Hicks, who will play football at GMC next year, lifted a total of 1,340 pounds.

"He's just animalistic," Ingram said.

Hicks had the top clean lift with 330 pounds and nearly squatted 600.

Reaves set the state record with a 460-pound bench press, but Ingram said Hicks benched 470 when they got back to school.

"I think he can get 500," Ingram said.

Dublin came in fifth.

Dublin's Mike Hall finished second in the 191-205 weight class.

COLLEGE CHOICES

Bleckley County all-state basketball player Carl Hall will stay close to home and play for Middle Georgia College, Hall said recently.

Hall averaged 22 points and 12 rebounds for the Royals, who advanced to the Class AA quarterfinals. The 6-foot-8 senior was named to the Georgia Sports Writers all-state team following the season.

Westside pitcher Ben Gillespie recently signed Abraham Baldwin College.

The senior is 2-0 with a 1.56 ERA this season. As a junior, Gillespie went 3-5 with a 1.95 ERA.

Compiled by Jonathan Heeter of The Telegraph staff



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