

General McArthur enlists with Kirkwood baseball

Written by Jim Ecker
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The Kirkwood baseball team could have a new commander on the field next season.

His named is General McArthur, a shortstop from Crete-Monee High School in Illinois who has joined the Eagles as a freshman for the 2016 campaign. General McArthur is his legal given name and not a nickname based on the famous World War II commander.

His family obviously admires the original Gen. McArthur, but Kirkwood Coach Todd Rima simply hopes this General McArthur can help the Eagles win some battles in junior college baseball games. Rima also signed Hunter Fiorito, a shortstop from Lake Park, Ill., and will let the two new shortstops battle it out for the starting job.

"I think it's going to be a fun battle to see those two compete to see who's going to play shortstop, but I feel good about both of them," said Rima.

Kirkwood needs a new shortstop after losing Sulliam Reyes to graduation.

Rima has signed 17 new players for the 2016 season, including 12 lowans who arrive with strong credentials.

"I really like this group," said Rima, entering his fourth year at Kirkwood. "What I like best about them is, it fits our needs.

"We have a great corps of guys coming back. We had a few things that we needed to add and we were able to do that. We're bringing in a ton of kids who have won a ton of games."

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Kaden Wadle, a pitcher from Mason City Newman, was the Player of the Year in Class 1A in Iowa this year. Brock Adams, a second baseman from Clear Lake, was the Class 2A Player of the Year.

Colin Kreiter of North Scott, Joey Verstegen of Mason City Newman and Jake Faur of Clinton were named first team all-state this season. Kolton Rose of Alburnett was second team all-state. Just about everybody else was named to their all-conference, all-district or all-area teams.

Four of the players helped their clubs win state titles. Several others helped their teams reach the state tournament.

"They've had success," Rima noted, "so they bring a winning mentality to our program."

Rima, who also coaches at Prairie, has brought three Prairie Hawks to Kirkwood this year with catcher Corbin Day, pitcher Drew Yanecek and pitcher Brody Alberts. They helped the Hawks win the first Mississippi Valley Conference title in school history this summer and set the school record with 31 victories.

Day originally committed to Central College, but changed his mind and enrolled at Kirkwood. He's a hard-nosed catcher who rarely lets a pitch get away from him.

"You know what you're going to get every day from him," said Rima. "He represents what you want a Kirkwood Eagle to be."

Yanecek and Alberts are not overpowering pitchers, but they both have good curveballs and know how to get outs. Kreiter, the outfielder from North Scott, hit .403 this season with 12 doubles, eight homers and 28 RBIs. He was also an outstanding wrestler and football player for the Lancers, setting school records in both sports.

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"He wants to play baseball," said Rima. "Big, strong, physical kid. Knows how to win."

Wadle, a pitcher, went 8-1 this season and helped Newman win two state titles. "He lost one game in his whole high school career," said Rima, noting Wadle began playing for the varsity as a freshman.

Brock Adams is the younger brother of Ozzie Adams, who just finished his career at Kirkwood. He hit .417 this season and went 8-1 on the mound at Clear Lake.

Verstegen hit .408 with 18 doubles at Newman. He also went 7-2 with a 1.18 ERA as a pitcher.

Faur, a pitcher from Clinton, has a "big arm" with a 90 mph fastball. He played in the IHSBCA all-star series this summer.

Rose, a third baseman from Alburnett, socked 11 home runs with 27 doubles and 58 RBIs this year while batting .534. Rima hopes Rose will add some much-needed pop to the batting order, along with Kreiter and others.

Bo Greenlee, a 6-foot-5 lefthander from Waverly, compiled a 5-1 record this year. Ben Rodriguez, a pitcher from Sioux City North, throws in the upper 80's and is another hurler with a "big arm."

Jake Morrissey, a pitcher from Ankeny, throws in the upper 80's and pitched this season with a slight tear in his labrum. He will be red-shirted at Kirkwood in 2016 while he recovers from surgery.

Kirkwood also signed Tyler Bordner, a catcher from Morris, Ill.; Tyler Hill, an outfielder from Morgan Park, Ill.; and Omar Gonzalez, a catcher from Puerto Rico.

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Rima thinks his new recruiting class will help the Eagles challenge for the conference title.

"We've gotten closer every year," he said. "And I believe it's now time to knock that wall down and get to that point. I like this group."