Baseball Stallions Counting on Freshmen to Lead the Charge in 2016

TIFTON—Fourteen new freshman recruits will shoulder a heavy burden for the Golden Stallions of Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College during the 2016 baseball season.

Brandon Reeder, recently named the ABAC head coach after wearing the interim title during the 2015 campaign, said the freshmen will add much needed depth to a squad which streaked out to a 12-2 start in conference play but wound up fourth in the league tournament.

“We lost our entire infield from last year’s team so we have some holes to fill,” Reeder, a former standout player at Tiftarea Academy, said. “There are a lot of little areas we can improve on from last year.”

Reeder said the freshman recruits include Cain Peterson, a third baseman from Eastman; Austin Guest, a pitcher from Brunswick; Hunter Bramlett, a catcher from Douglas; Bran Davis, an outfielder from Douglas; Preston Sparks, a pitcher from Kathleen; Tristain Daugherty, a pitcher from LaGrange; Dakota Sloan, an outfielder from Hawkinsville; Bryce Shupe, an outfielder from Walnut Grove; Chandler Hyman, a pitcher from Walnut Grove; Ethan Edwards,
an outfielder from Macon; Brett Sitton, a third baseman from Fox Creek, S.C.; Tyler Bunn, a pitcher from LaGrange; Keaton Gordon, a pitcher from Gray; and Colby Melton, a second baseman from Thomasville.

Peterson hit .517 during his senior season at Dodge County High School where he was named to the all-region first team at third base. He had three home runs, 23 runs batted in, an on-base percentage of .641, and a slugging percentage of .827.

“Cain is an exciting addition to our team,” Reeder said of the player who led his league in batting average, homers, slugging percentage, runs batted in, and on-base percentage. “He has middle of the order power and is a good physical-looking player. He’s one of the elite players in our area, and we are happy to keep him close to home.”

Guest was the Brunswick High School Player of the Year after posting a 3-3 record on the mound with an incredible 1.28 earned run average. The right hander struck out 42 batters and recorded the top batting average on the Pirates. The 6-foot-4 inch, 210-pounder was the Region 3-AAAAA Sub-Region Player of the Year, was named first team all-region, and was selected for the all-state game.

“Austin is a bulldog on the hill who can really throw it,” Reeder said. “I have seen him throw it up to 89 miles an hour, and I think there is more to come with his big frame.”

Bramlett carved out a .353 batting average during his senior season for Coffee High School. He led the Trojans in doubles and runs batted in. Named his team’s Gamechanger Defender, Bramlett received first team all-region honors after going the entire season without an error.
“Hunter is an extremely energetic player behind the plate,” Reeder said. “He will be a defensive workhorse. Any offense he can add will be a bonus to his very athletic catching style.”

Davis joined Bramlett on the all-region team by hitting .419 during his senior campaign and reaching base on half of his plate appearances. He had the top batting average at Coffee High for the past two seasons and did not commit an error in either of those years. He also received the Trojans’ Scholar-Athlete award.

“Bran is a tough out,” Reeder said. “He’s a rangy outfielder who will eventually become a five-tool player who can impact the game in a lot of ways. He’s as gritty as they come.”

From his spot as team captain, Sparks led Veterans High School to the semifinals of the state tournament. Named to the all-region team and the Georgia Dugout Club all-state team, Sparks set school records for innings pitched, strikeouts, and earned run average. He plans to participate in the ABAC Honors Program utilizing the 4.0 grade point average he attained in high school.

“Preston is a phenomenal young man who chews up innings and wants the ball in the biggest situations,” Reeder said. “He is going to pound the strike zone with mid-80s velocity and good command of his off-speed pitches.”

Named the Region 1-AAAAA pitcher of the year, Daugherty posted an 8-3 record with a 2.23 earned run average for LaGrange High School. For his mound expertise, he was named to the all-region and all-state teams.
“Tristain takes the mound and competes,” Reeder said. “He has great stuff from a sidearm slot, and he’ll throw in the late innings for us. I don’t think there’s much that scares this kid.”

Hitting from the left side, Sloan pounded a school record 19 home runs during his tenure at Hawkinsville High School. He guided the Red Devils to the quarterfinal round of the state tournament on the baseball diamond and to the state championship from the quarterback position on the football field. Named to the all-region team, Sloan compiled a sparkling 3.42 grade point average in the classroom.

“Dakota will add gap-to-gap pop to our lineup,” Reeder said. “He really impressed me in his workout by exhibiting his hitting power, his agility, and his arm from the outfield. He’s a really good athlete.”

Besides batting a red-hot .425, Shupe stole 17 bases while batting in the lead-off spot for Walnut Grove High School. He didn’t make an error all season, received all-region honors, and was selected for the United States Army Reserve National Scholar Award after posting a 4.03 grade point average.

“Bryce is a situational hitter who is the epitome of a ball player,” Reeder said. “He has great instincts, and he’s also a fantastic student. He is all around very impressive.”

Hyman also played for Walnut Grove, recording a 2-1 record on the mound with an earned run average of 2.28. He was a first team all-region performer.

“Chandler is a ground ball pitcher who will look to earn a spot in our rotation,” Reeder said. “He has excellent command of a mid-80s sinker and knows how to pitch.”
Edwards piled up all-region and all-state honors after batting .329 and stealing 15 bases during his senior season at Mount de Sales Academy. In his final two seasons, he committed only one error.

“Ethan has some power potential,” Reeder said. “He hit some home runs last summer that were very impressive. He’s very athletic, and I look for him to compete for a spot in the outfield.”

Sitton had an awesome senior campaign when he hit .533, clouted two home runs, and had 30 runs batted in. For his efforts, he was named to the South Carolina Baseball Coaches Association all-star team.

“Brett is a smooth fielder who has the actions of an elite player,” Reeder said. “He’s a consistent line drive hitter, and I love that. He played third base in high school but I believe he has the tools to be a really good shortstop at this level.”

Bunn roamed the outfield and pitched for Troup County but it’s his experience on the mound for the Tigers that caught Reeder’s attention. The lefthander was 2-0 on the hill. In the classroom, he excelled with a 4.13 grade point average.

“Tyler has spot-on command and has the type of stuff to get outs for us,” Reeder said. “He just needs to throw strikes, and he will be successful.”

Gordon propelled Jones County into the semifinals of the state tournament with his 6-1 record on the mound coupled with a glittering 1.91 earned run average. A first team all-region selection, he struck out 48 batters, won the Greyhounds most valuable player award, and tossed a no-hitter.
“I’ve known Keaton since last summer, and you won’t find a kid with a better attitude,” Reeder said. “He had a good senior season on the mound and swinging the bat. With the Stallions, he will focus solely on his pitching and bolster the depth of our staff.”

Melton had an on-base percentage of .405 for Thomas County Central during his senior season when he was an all-region pick. He struck out only four times all year and stole 11 bases for the Yellow Jackets.

“Colby is a hard-working kid who wants to contribute in any way he can,” Reeder said. “He’s a tough out no matter who’s on the mound, and I love the way he competes.”

###