

2005 OUTLOOK

The 2005 Pittsburgh Panther baseball team will have a very different look heading into the 2005 campaign, but the goal is the same – The Big East Conference Championship. In 2004, the Panthers finished off an impressive three-year run of 110 wins, a Big East Tournament appearance, numerous team & individual records and a new sense of respect.

In 2005, the Panthers have a great number of new personnel, many of which will be called upon to have an immediate impact on the program. Gone are Big East Player of the Year, P.J. Hiser, a Cleveland Indians' draft pick, Big East Co-Pitcher of the Year Nick Evangelista, who was drafted by the Philadelphia Phillies, and All-Big East selections in Mike Scanzano, Tom Cashman and Bryan Spamer. Additionally, defensive standout Alex Rybczak behind the dish is gone as well as T.J. Gornati, who was drafted by the San Francisco Giants. In total, six players from the 2004 edition of the Panthers are playing professional baseball. Although the Panthers lost several key team members following last season, there are others ready continue the tradition of excellence.

"I was very proud of our accomplishments last year, but our goal will always be to win the Big East Championship and have a shot at the NCAA Tournament," head coach **JOE JORDANO** said. "By the experts accounts, we were a game short in 2004. Even though we lost a ton from last year, we are excited about the returning players and the new players on our club. This could be an exciting year for us."

CATCHERS

The Panthers will have a new catcher this season, but one face remains the same. Senior **MIKE ZAMBRICZKI** returns after a redshirt season to finish his career behind the dish for the Panthers. Zambriczki is an excellent defensive catcher that has should some offensive pop throughout his time with the program.

Joining Zambriczki behind the plate is junior college transfer **JEFF STEVENS**. Stevens is a prototypical catcher with excellent bloxking skills and a strong arm. Stevens offensively is a solid hitter and did show some pop during his career at Louisburg College in North Carolina. Both catchers will see ample time for the Panthers

INFIELDERS

Three new faces will grace the infield for Pittsburgh. At third base, junior college transfer **MIKE MEGALE** brings tenacity and experience to the hot corner while freshman **DAN WILLIAMS** shows "pro potential" at both third and short.

"I like our third base guys, both Mike and Dan bring something a little different to the table in a unique way," Jordano said. "I believe that the guy that is consistent defensively and puts up some numbers will get the majority of the playing time at third."

Moving to short stop that had been anchored for four years by three-time All Big East selection Bryan Spamer, will more than likely be filled by sophomore **JIMMY MAYER**. Mayer is a tough hard-nosed player with excellent range and can hit for average. He also has above average speed and an excellent arm defensively.

Jordano adds, "The key to Mayer is consistency. We need him to help us solidify the middle for us. Short is a critical position and he has the ability to do it, but has not had, until this season, the opportunity to play day in and day out. I am confident he will be successful."

Williams also plays shortstop and will see some time at short as well as third base.

On the right side, heralded sophomore second baseman **JIM NEGRYCH** returns for the Panthers. Negrych, selected as the Preseason Big East Player of the Year by the Conference Coaches, will be looked upon to anchor the middle of the Pittsburgh Lineup. A high-energy player, Negrych is expected to be a major factor for the Panthers run at a Big East and NCAA Tournament bids.

"Jim is a very talented player," Jordano said of the 2004 Big East Rookie of the Year. "I love how he plays the game but he is in a different role this year. He is the man. Opponents are going to be gunning for him. I believe Jimmy will be more than ready for the challenge."

Also at second is **JUSTIN CICATELLO**, a transfer from Florida Community College. Cicatello is a smooth fielding middle infielder with a strong arm. He will also be used off the mound in relief situations this season as well. Jordano adds, "Justin pitches from down under and it is borderline filthy to a right hander. He does not have much experience on the mound, but I am sure he will get work this year. He could be awfully good."



BEN COPELAND

At first base, freshman **DAN FORD** has taken the lead. Ford is a strong, left-handed hitting power threat. Although first base is a relatively new position for him, his bat has opened a position in the lineup. "I was very impressed with the way Danny swung the bat. He has to be in our everyday lineup."

In addition, sophomore **EDGARD SUCRE** will also see time at first base. "Eddie has great potential. He has to put it all together to get a spot in the day-to-day lineup."

OUTFIELDERS

The outfield position is solid for the Panthers. Leading the way is highly-touted junior centerfielder **BEN COPELAND**. An All-Big East selection from 2004 and a Cape Cod Baseball League All Star, Copeland is considered one of the top outfielders in the country.

"Ben has a great sense of the game," Jordano said. "He has great instincts. He is a very valuable member of this team. I am sure he is going to have a great future in professional ball."

In right field sophomore **PETER PARISE** returns after a solid freshman season. Parise is a very talented athlete that is capable of playing numerous positions on the diamond. A Bronx, New York Native, Parise possesses a plus arm from the outfield and showed signs of incredible offensive skill during his rookie campaign. "Pete has all the tools to be an unbelievable player for us," Jordano said. "He has to be consistent and remain hungry from day one to the end of the season. Pete can turn a game around for us. He is an impressive player."

Left field is going to be a competitive spot for the Panthers. Returning with ample experience from a year ago is junior **DAVID CLINE**. However, Cline is coming off shoulder surgery in the off-season and will be pushed from several others. "David has unbelievable speed," Jordano said. "He is a difference maker with his speed. He just needs to be consistent on both sides to be an everyday player."

SEAN CONLEY, a freshman from nearby Blackhawk High School, will push for time. Conely is a tough, tenacious, old school type player. He has to improve his arm strength but his offensive ability should provide opportunity for Conley in left.

Other freshman **KEEGAN MCCAMMETT**, a transfer from LSU, and Eric Chamness have considerable tools that have to become more consistent in order to see time this season. McCammett, a highly-touted recruit out of high school, is a pure hitter with impressive power. McCammett needs confidence and game experience to help the Panthers this season. Chamness is a flat-out athlete who is strong, quick and has great instincts for the game.

Also roaming the outfield is junior **MIKE MUZEKA**. Muzeka is a hard-working solid player.

PITCHERS

The pitching staff could be the difference in 2005. The Panthers return two redshirt pitchers with valuable experience and have a talented group of returning and new pitchers rounding out the staff.

"Last year, we rode the arms of Nick Evangelista, P.J. Hiser and T.J. Gornati," Jordano said. "Those guys are all now in pro ball and we need to look to others to carry us this season. I have been very pleased with the work we have done in the off-season and am pleased with our pitching program and our staff is ready to get after it."



JEFF BARNYAK

Leading the way will be returners **DON RHOTEN** and **JEFF BARNYAK**, who are both back this year after redshirting last season.

"Both Don and Jeff have pitched in big games for us in the past four years and have a great deal of experience in the conference," Jordano said. "Hopefully, they will stay healthy and have productive senior seasons for us."

Another senior hurler that evolved as the third conference starter from last year, **ANDREW KUSS** returns for his senior season. "Andrew is not over-powering, but has some great movement and has three pitches that work. Andrew needs to keep the ball down and be a ground ball pitcher. He can be a factor again this year."

Sophomore **PAUL NARDOZZI** will also push for a starting job this season. As a freshman, NardoZZi gained valuable experience and became a very productive pitcher by the end of the year. "Paul has the stuff that can dominate a game," Jordano said. "He has a solid fastball, a solid breaking ball and a devastating changeup. Paul could be in our top three."

Duke University transfer sophomore **BILLY MULDOWNEY** will play a major role for the Panthers. Armed with a low 90's fast ball and a solid braking pitch, it is likely Muldowney will make a run at the number one spot in the rotation.

"Billy is a great addition to our staff," said Jordano. "He is also going to be a candidate for DH as well. He has great stuff on the mound and is a pitcher that can beat anyone at anytime."

Junior college transfer, **SHAUN BUTLER**, also brings a tremendous amount of experience and talent to the Panthers. "We recruited Shaun out of high school and he is two years older and that much better on the mound," Jordano said. "He will probably close on Saturdays and start on Sundays during Big East play. He has a live fastball and solid depth on his breaking pitch. He has improved his changeup. With three pitches he is going to be very tough to beat."

Senior **ELI FRIEDMAN** brings depth and experience to the bullpen. "Eli can be very tough to hit," Jordano added. "If he keeps the ball down, Eli will be very effective for us. He throws all of his pitches from three different angles causing difficulties for opposing hitters. Plus he is tough in the clutch."

From the left side, the Panthers will rely on three southpaws senior **ADAM LUCKETTE**, sophomore **MIKE BASSAGE** and freshman **ROB BRANT**. "All three have talent and need to be consistent for us."

Additionally for the Panthers, highly-recruited freshman **CHAD BAKER** will see ample innings this season. Baker, a native of Canfield, Ohio, was a top prospect out of high school. "We love Chad's size and his upside," Jordano said. "He is going to be very good for us."

Other freshman pitchers include **KYLE LANDIS** and **ANTHONY ROSSI**. "I have been very pleased with Kyle and Anthony's progress and both have a bright future for us," Jordano said.

Rounding out the staff is sophomores **JOHN HAY** and **MATT TOKARCZYK** as well as senior **JOE LLOYD**. "John saw ample time on the mound for us last season. Matt was redshirted last year and needs to improve on his consistency. Joe is a solid pitcher that just needs to get some experience. Joe has a great body for pitching and has a high upside as well."

"All in all, I am pleased with the quality and depth of our staff. We need to provide our offense with the opportunity to win games. I am confident we will be successful."