

REX Roster Filled with Terre Haute Twist

The Terre Haute REX have finalized their 2016 roster with several recognizable names, as the Prospect League franchise looks to defend its 2015 summer college wooden bat league championship starting in May.

Two left-handed hitters from Terre Haute North will be making their REX debuts this summer, as Ball State redshirt freshman Zach Milam and current Patriot senior T.J. Collett will be performing in their hometown.

Both players were key figures in North's state finals run in 2014, and Collett helped the Patriots to return to the championship game again last June.

Milam sat out last spring at Ball State as a redshirt after joining the Cardinals as a preferred walk-on and has played well in a reserve role this season.

Collett, who has signed to play for the University of Kentucky next year, is taking advantage of a new Prospect League rule which allows each franchise to have two highly-qualified recent high school graduates on their rosters.

Previously, only players who had already attended college and had eligibility remaining were able to play in the league.

Collett has received numerous national honors and has been chosen for several pre-season All-American teams this year.

"I am excited for Zach and T.J. to be a part of the REX this season," said Bruce Rosselli, REX partner/general manager. "Zach is a great kid and has great upside, and he should fit right in after his season with Ball State.

"T.J. is someone I was thinking about last season when the Prospect League board discussed and voted on this rule change," said Rosselli, who is the President of the league's board of directors. "You have to be highly ranked in the nation to qualify for playing for the REX, and with T.J.'s high school honors, unless he is drafted and signs professionally, this will be a great opportunity for him to broaden his development and progress to the next level at UK next fall."

Manager Bobby Segal and his coaching staff of Scott Lawson (pitching) and Juan Calderon (hitting) return intact.

"We are very excited to have a new crop of players this season with the Terre Haute Rex in hopes of making another playoff push and repeating as Prospect League champions," Segal said.

Leading the returning players from last summer are Terre Haute South grad Damon Olds and Ethan Larrison of Shelbyville, who are both playing for Indiana State this spring.

Olds will be playing his third straight summer for the REX, while Larrison will be in his second year on the squad. Joining them is pitcher Matt Weissheier of Hofstra, who will also be playing for the second year.

Olds pitched in 21 games last summer in the regular, all in relief, with a 4-1 record and a 3.25 ERA with one save. He struck out 35 hitters and walked just 12.

Larrison pitched in nine games during the regular season, recording a 5-1 record and a 1.83 ERA. He struck out 31 hitters and walked 16, and had his most important outing of the summer in the championship game of the playoffs.

With the REX leading the best-of-three series 1-0, Larrison took the mound and no-hit the West Virginia Miners for the first six innings. Evan Miller came on in relief, and the team got a clutch two-run double from Korie Vire to record a 3-1 victory and claim the league crown.

Weissheier pitched in 13 innings, recording a 1-1 record and a 3.75 ERA.

“We are pleased to have back three pitchers from last year's champions,” Rosselli said. “They were all very valuable, and they know what it takes to be successful in this league.

“We are also thrilled to have back our entire coaching staff,” Rosselli said. “They were a huge part of our success last year, and they all do a tremendous job.”

Pitcher Jacob Murray of Central Arkansas (formerly of Wabash Valley College) was on the REX for the first half of last season.

Two other 2016 REX members, infielder Rey Perez of Florida International and outfielder Manual DeJesus of Ohio University, had signed with the team last year but were unable to play due to injury.

Besides Olds and Larrison, the other two REX players from Indiana State (allowable under the limit of four per franchise from the same college) are freshman pitcher Triston Polley of Brownsburg and outfielder Chris Ayers of Westfield.

The REX will open their season playing the first five games of the season on the road, due to Indiana State hosting the Missouri Valley Conference tournament at Bob Warn Field.

The season opener is May 26 at Chillicothe, and the home opener is June 1 against Hannibal.

REX notes – The 28-player roster consists of players originating from 14 different states (West Virginia, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Colorado, South Dakota, Texas, Florida, New York, California and Nevada).

Three players are coming to the REX from Loyola Marymount, where former REX manager Ronnie Prettyman is an assistant coach.

Another player comes from North Florida, where former ISU director of baseball operations Brent McNeil is a volunteer assistant coach. McNeil will be the manager of the Prospect League's new Lafayette franchise.

The team will again have an international flavor, as players are also on the roster from Venezuela, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Canada.

The team's complete roster is available at rexbaseball.com.

All REX games will be broadcast this season on the Internet at rexbaseball.com and also on radio for the first time via The Fan at 1130 AM and 99.5 FM.

Two franchises departed from the Eastern Division of last year's 12-team league, Richmond (Ind.) and Jamestown (N.Y.), and were replaced in the league by the Lafayette (Ind.) Aviators and the DuPage Drones of Lisle, Ill.

DuPage was added to the Western Division, with the second-year Kokomo Jackrabbits franchise moving to the Eastern Division. Lafayette will play in the Eastern Division.

The REX and the three geographically closest Prospect League franchises – the Danville Dans, Kokomo and Lafayette – will admit season ticket holders free of charge from each of the other three franchises.

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