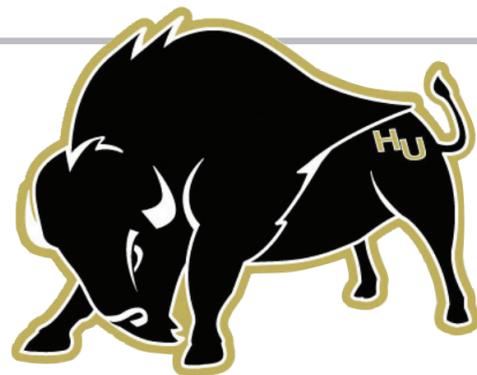


SECTION B BISON



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Photo by CRAIG RAINBOLT | The Bison

Sophomore Chase Presley fields a groundball and throws to first base during a recent home game.

Baseball season winding down

by JAMES BUCE
student writer

The Harding University baseball team is wrapping up the 2010 season with only four games left before the regular season finale April 25.

Currently sitting sixth in the Gulf South Conference West Division, the Bisons have compiled a 21-22 record with games left against University of Arkansas-Monticello and Arkansas Tech University.

The team has struggled at times but has shown improvement throughout

the season, and there are high hopes going into next year.

"We have been somewhat inconsistent," freshman Lucas Waddell said. "But have shown we can compete with some very good teams when we play to our full potential."

Waddell, a freshman pitcher, has shown solid outings this year leading the team with a 4-1 record and a 2.40 ERA. He won the Gulf South Conference West Division Pitcher of the Week on April 6.

Along with Troy Keith and Kyle Cline, Waddell is the third pitcher on

the roster to have won the award.

"It's an honor to win the same award as those two great pitchers and be apart of such a great pitching staff," Waddell said.

With only four games left, the Bisons are still in control of their own hopes of a playoff berth in the GSC Tournament.

"As of right now our team has a great chance of making the playoffs," junior Jason Nappi said. "We have backed ourselves in a corner a bit, but we still control our own destiny as far as we can go."

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Diversity key for relay team's success

by SARAH KYLE
student writer

After years of a distance-dominated track team, Harding University's men's 4x400 sprint relay team provisionally qualified for nationals at the Bison Invitational on Saturday, April 3.

The relay is the first sprint relay team at Harding to provisionally qualify in what team member Frank Bolling, who runs the first leg of the relay, said has been six or seven years. The team is keeping their fingers crossed for an official spot in the competition.

The NCAA invites 12 to 14 teams out of all who provisionally qualify to participate in the national meet and releases the list after the last qualifying race of the season.

The team has a unique chemistry, with team members ranging from freshman Kory Howard to sophomore Milton Stewart, junior Blake Arnold and Bolling, the senior of the group.

The diversity works to the team's advantage, according to Bolling, who said the varying levels of experience push each athlete to perform his best.

"It works out well because we've got leadership, but we've also got guys who can take care of business. Kory's really stepped up even as a freshman. He's shown real maturity just going out there and working with Blake and Milton every single day," Bolling said. "It helps when you have two guys that are strong leaders on the team and a freshman who can just jump in and learn from them and work hard with them. They've really pushed each other, and it's been good."

Arnold, who runs the last leg of the race, said that the biggest change for him this season has been his mentality and training ethic, which he thinks made a big difference in his running.

"I've been going hard seven days a week since August," Arnold said. "I've dropped a lot of time. I've been more committed."

For Howard, the third runner who is facing his first collegiate season, training with more experienced athletes has been a positive but challenging experience.

"It's weird because it's more relaxed, but at the same time it's a lot more difficult," Howard said. "The workouts are ridiculous, trying to keep up with Blake and Milton. It definitely creates faster improvement though, having people that are a lot faster than you to run with."

The team continues to look forward to the rest of the season, with goals to shave up to two seconds off their race time in the Kansas Relays this weekend.

"We'll be fresh then, and we'll only be running relays," Bolling said.

No matter what the remainder of the season holds, second leg Stewart said he feels blessed to have the ability to run.

"I have been running since my mom took me to the doctor as a baby to ask what was wrong with my feet and legs, and why I was still so clumsy at the age when most kids start walking; the doctor simply said 'He's a runner,'" Stewart said. "I run track because of the feeling after a race. There is no better feeling. I'm competitive, and God has blessed me with the ability to run fast, so I'm doing it."



Photo courtesy of Blake Arnold

Senior Frank Bolling, freshman Kory Howard, sophomore Milton Stewart and junior Blake Arnold pray before beginning a race at First Security Stadium.

National League preview and MLB awards picks

CHRIS O'DELL

The Leadoff



With the baseball season now in full bloom, there are several things to learn about teams around the National League.

The Philadelphia Phillies have to be considered the favorites to repeat as NL champions. The New York Mets' off-season acquisition of Jason Bay did absolutely nothing to help their chances at contending this year. The Houston Astros are in some serious trouble. And Albert Pujols is still, without question, the best player in the game.

Although some fans might already feel their teams' chances at postseason play are slipping away, the season is still young and there are many games left to be played. After previewing each division in the American League last issue, let's take a look at the three NL divisions and the frontrunner to win each pennant.

NL East- The Phillies are the obvious favorites to win the division and possibly even the World Series this season. After acquiring ace Roy Halladay from the Toronto Blue Jays this off-season, the boys from Philly put themselves in prime position to defeat any team that steps onto the diamond with them. With World Series experience in each of the last two seasons, the Phillies might soon be taking home their second title in three years.

The obvious question regarding the East is if anyone can compete with Philadelphia for the division crown. The only possible candidates are the Atlanta Braves and the Florida Marlins. However, with the Phillies sitting pretty at 7-1 through its first eight games of the season, I find it highly doubtful the Braves or Marlins give Philadelphia any cause for concern. I see the Phillies winning the NL East pennant by at least 10 games this season and once again heading to the World Series to represent the National League.

NL Central- One thing we know for certain after the first two weeks of the regular season is that no team in the NL Central has to worry about the Astros contending this year. After an 0-8 start to the season, Houston has been outscored by 30 runs already in the young season. This might be the year we see the Astros deal many of their star players, such as Roy Oswalt and Lance Berkman.

As far as contenders go, the St. Louis Cardinals went into the season as the overwhelming favorite to win the division and have done nothing to hurt their chances. The team is 6-2 through eight games and has outscored their opponents by a 19-run margin. The Cardinals also have not only the best player in the game today, but possibly the best baseball player to ever play the game. Albert Pujols is so good he has many people wondering if he really is a "machine."

Outside of Cincinnati and Chicago, no team in the division will be able to scare the Cardinals. In fact, I might go as far as saying

the Cardinals are a complete lock to win the NL Central this year and might ultimately meet up with the Phillies in the NLCS.

NL West- In the West, the San Francisco Giants are off to a surprisingly quick start. After posting a 7-2 record thus far in the season, the Giants might have emerged as the division's most likely team to take home the division crown this year. The NL West is far more open than the other divisions in the National League, but San Fran might have ultimately announced their presence in the division this season.

The Arizona Diamondbacks and Colorado Rockies are sitting in good positions on the early season with each team having a 5-3 record so far. However, the surprise of the entire league so far might be the 3-5 start of the Los Angeles Dodgers. The team that many experts pegged as a division favorite heading into the season even began the season with two straight losses to the lowly Pittsburgh Pirates. I'm willing to overlook any early season struggles by a Joe Torre team though. I still get the feeling that Torre will have his team right at the top of the division when all is said and done. My prediction is the Dodgers finishing in first place with the Giants not far behind for a close second in the NL West. The boys in blue will join the Phillies and Cardinals as the three NL division winners with the Giants earning the wild card to round out the four playoff teams in the National League.

Now that we have taken a look at both leagues and broke down

each division in the majors, we can finish the 2010 MLB preview and give award predictions for the season.

NL MVP- This might be the easiest of every award to pick. Barring any major injuries during the season, Albert Pujols should completely run away with the award. The 30-year-old Dominican Republic native might hit over .350 at the plate while also driving in 120 runs and hitting 35 home runs. What seems like a ridiculously amazing year by anyone's standards has now seemed routine for the Cardinals' first-baseman.

AL MVP- With the NL MVP as the easiest of all the awards to pick, the AL MVP is perhaps the most difficult. Last season, Minnesota Twins' catcher Joe Mauer emerged as a bona fide star. He joined the likes of Alex Rodriguez, Ichiro Suzuki and Dustin Pedroia as AL superstars. Players such as Mark Teixeira, Josh Hamilton, Justin Morneau and Evan Longoria are also top candidates. However, I will go with a sleeper for this award and choose Rangers' outfielder Nelson Cruz to take home the goods.

Cruz became the first player in 60 years to hit at least six home runs in his first eight games this week and has been carrying a Rangers offense that has struggled in the last year or so. With the supporting cast to possibly win the AL West, the team's record shouldn't hurt Cruz's chances this season. I see the "Cruz Missile" hitting around .305 this season and blasting 40 homers. He might also drive in 110 runs or so with great

protection in front and behind the slugger.

NL Cy Young- I'll go with the easy choice on this one and choose the new Philadelphia Phillie Roy Halladay. The Cardinals have two pitchers, Adam Wainwright and Chris Carpenter, that are capable of challenging Halladay for the award. However, I see Halladay leading the rotation for the NL's best team and winning around 22 games for his team. His star status will increase even more now that he is playing for a title contender.

AL Cy Young- Several pitchers come to mind as possible candidates in the AL. Kansas City Royals' stud pitcher Zach Greinke might have the best stuff in all of baseball. However, his team will most likely finish too far out of first place, which will hurt the ace's chances. The Royals' offense will also make it hard for Greinke to earn as many wins as other great pitchers around the league.

I'll go with Mariners' ace Felix Hernandez. The 24-year-old right-hander has a nasty pitch that can make even the best hitters look foolish at the plate. He has recently been one of the more underappreciated players in baseball, but will soon get the credit he is due.

So there you have it. However, nothing ever happens the way things are supposed to, so we'll see how good the picks look several months from now.

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