

# Cal State Stanislaus Warriors Baseball 2009

## Expectations high for Warrior baseball

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When a team reaches the pinnacle of success, the logical thing to do is to work to get back to that position — but what happens when a team “almost” gets there?

It took 19 years for the Cal State Stanislaus baseball team to make the NCAA postseason as a Division II program, but it did just that in 2008, entering the six-team double-elimination tournament in Chico as a No. 4 seed. The players and their supporters wore T-shirts that read, “We Believe,” and the team that seemed to be riding a wave of destiny after grabbing more than a dozen last at-bat victories during the regular season marched into the NCAA West Region playoffs for the first time since 1989 and the first time as a Division II program.

However, after rising to as high as No. 11 in the nation during the regular season, the team would bow out of the postseason after two tough West Region losses, only leaving it more hungry and anxious than ever to make a return trip.

“The expectations are higher than they’ve been,” said Warriors head coach Kenny Leonesio, now entering his seventh year at the helm of the program. “When you have that many guys returning, they want to go back. But I don’t think they just want to go back, they want to win.”

It was an impressive 2008 season as the Warriors tallied a 26-9 record at Warrior Field and earned a team record 24 in the California Collegiate Athletic Association. In addition to team accolades, the Warriors had six players earn postseason honors. Jake Oketani and graduated senior

Dennis Wolfe earned all-CCAA honorable-mention, graduated senior Andrew Demott and Eric Federico were voted to the CCAA’s second team, Kyle Loretelli was voted to the first team and senior Marquis Fleming, one of the best pitchers ever to throw off the mound for the Warriors, was named the CCAA Pitcher of the Year. Also, Loretelli earned honors on two different NCAA West Region teams, while Fleming was the unanimous NCAA West Region Pitcher of the Year and was voted an All-American.

The Warriors also made the CCAA Championship Tournament in 2008, only their second trip since starting competition in the conference in 1999 and their first trip in five years. It was there that the Warriors found a bit of postseason magic. After losing their first postseason game, the Warriors set a new single season school record for wins (37) by keeping their playoff title hopes alive in an elimination game against UC San Diego. Now-departed senior Adam Fonville hit a game-winning double and the Warriors earned their 50th all-time postseason victory, only to be eliminated later that night by eventual CCAA and West Region champion Sonoma State in a 13-11 extra-inning affair.

The Warriors begin the 2009 season ranked 24th in the Collegiate Baseball Newspaper’s Division II poll, with three other CCAA teams in the top 40 with



them. No. 4 UC San Diego, No. 7 Chico State and No. 40 Cal State L.A. will all look to take Cal State Stanislaus’ spot in the postseason, although the conference’s coaches do not quite think so. The Warriors were picked to finish fourth and make a return trip to the conference championship tournament in the coaches’ preseason poll.

The Warriors return 17 players from the 2008 roster (seven pitchers and 10 position players) and have filled in the roster with a talented recruiting class. Offensively, the Warriors could provide more power and speed this season than last, which will be centered around Loretelli, who led the team with 12 homeruns and was second on the team with 14 stolen bases. The pitching staff will be affected by the loss of Fleming, but a solid group of returning players, along

with some impressive newcomers should help to fill the void.

“We were pleased with how recruiting went,” Leonesio said. “We should be better all around offensively.”

The schedule is tough once again as the Warriors will play three teams from the Great Northwest Athletic Conference, all of which are West Region Division II opponents. St. Martins University, Central Washington University and Northwest Nazarene will all travel to Warrior Field for non-conference action. The CCAA schedule will continue to be one of the toughest in the country with two top 25 teams, as well as the last two West Region champions in Sonoma State and Cal State L.A. Unlike last season when the Warriors had the benefit of hosting the top teams in the conference, they will have to travel this season to UC San Diego, Chico State, Cal State L.A. and Cal State San Bernardino.

“This could be the strongest the CCAA has been since I’ve been here,” Leonesio said.

### PITCHERS

No missing player will be more noticeable than Marquis Fleming, who was drafted in the 24th round by the American League Champion Tampa Bay Rays last summer and is pitching professionally with the Hudson Valley Renegades, the Rays’ short-season single A affiliate. Fleming leaves Cal State Stanislaus with records in single season strikeouts (118), career strikeouts (292) and

single season shutouts (5). His name is in the top three for career wins (3rd, 28) complete games (t-3rd, 20) and innings pitched (3rd, 349 2/3).

“I don’t think you try and replace a guy like that,” Leonesio said about Fleming. “Overall I think we’re deeper on the mound (and) the depth should be a strength.”

The pitching staff will be deeper and more flexible this season as multiple pitchers could see time as both starters and relievers. Federico will be back for his third season with the Warriors. Federico was an all-CCAA Honorable Mention pick a year ago and will be competing for one of the starting spots this season. He might also be used as a closer. Junior Spencer Snodgrass, a transfer from Division I San Jose State and Pitman High School graduate, should make a big impact on the staff this season.

Sophomore Andrew Stueve returns after starting 14 games as a freshman. Stueve was the Warriors’ solid No. 3 starter in ‘08 following Fleming and Federico, going 4-2 with 45 strikeouts in 86 2/3 innings pitched. Lefthander Derek Eaton comes to the Warriors from San Mateo College and could be useful both as a starter and reliever. Junior Dakota Watts, a transfer from Delta College, will be in the mix both to start and possibly finish games.

Eric Cendejas was a closer at Santa Ana College and will see time at the end of games for the Warriors this season. Sophomore Tony Smith and senior Matt Costa both saw time as starters last season and could again this season. Senior Andrew Troncale,