

Contact: Harold Jameson
Date: Jan. 28, 2004

‘Riders Picked Second

Magnolia, Ark. --- To the surprise of no one, Delta State University has been picked to win the Gulf South Conference West Division baseball championship in 2004 in a poll voted by conference coaches. It is also not surprising that Southern Arkansas University was chosen as the runner-up.

Delta State has won eight consecutive West Division championships. Southern Arkansas has finished second to Delta every year with one exception since joining the conference in 1995. DSU received every first-place vote possible, eight, and SAU received one. Since GSC coaches cannot vote for their own team, it was logical for SAU to receive that vote.

Following DSU’s 64 and SAU’s 54 total votes, Harding University was third with 49, the University of Central Arkansas fourth with 44, Arkansas Tech University fifth with 38, Henderson State University sixth with 29, the University of Arkansas-Monticello seventh with 22, Christian Brothers University eighth with 16, and Ouachita Baptist University ninth with eight.

The University of Alabama-Huntsville was a narrow choice to win the East Division over Valdosta State University 43-42 with the University of West Florida third with 37, the University of North Alabama fourth with 32, the University of West Alabama and the University of West Georgia tied for fifth with 24 each, the University of Montevallo seventh with 13 and Lincoln Memorial University eighth with seven.

Delta State, the defending GSC Post-Season Tournament champion, was an overwhelming favorite to repeat with 12 votes. Others receiving votes, all from the East, were Valdosta State with two and Alabama-Huntsville, West Florida, and North Alabama one each. The 2004 tournament will again be held in Millington, Tenn., May 6-9.

Delta State is ranked seventh in *Collegiate Baseball Newspaper’s* Top 40. Alabama-Huntsville is 16th, Southern Arkansas 21st, Valdosta State 28th and North Alabama 39th. In Baseball America’s Top 10, Delta State is third.

New conference coaches in ’04 are Montevallo’s Greg Goff, Lincoln Memorial’s Jeff Sziksai, and Southern Arkansas’ Mike Godfrey. Godfrey takes over the ‘Rider baseball program from Steve Goodheart, who retired after 23 seasons as head SAU coach at the end of last season. Godfrey assisted Goodheart from 1990-92.

The Pre-Season All-GSC West team includes five ‘Riders, outfielders Clayton Childers and Victor Duke, starting pitchers Brian Barr and Bobby Beeson, and relief pitcher Dustin Eisenbraun. Childers was first-team All-South Central Region in 2002, a first-team All-GSC selection in ’02, and second-team All-GSC in ’01 and ’03. He is a 6-3, 230-pound senior from El Dorado (Norphlet). Duke was a second-team All-GSC pick in ’03. He is a 5-10, 165-pound senior from Panama City, Panama. Barr was a second-team All-South Central Region selection and a first-team All-GSC choice in ’03. He is a 6-4, 225-pound senior from Texarkana (Arkansas). Beeson was a first-team All-GSC first base selection in 2002 and a second-team All-GSC pitcher in ’03. He is a 6-3, 230-pound junior from Magnolia. Eisenbraun, a 6-0, 170-pound senior, was first-team All-GSC last year.

Among the 2004 GSC baseball top newcomers are three ‘Riders, Daniel Beardsley, Chipper Crum, and Aharon Eggleston. Beardsley, a 6-0, 180-pound junior shortstop, is from Bayamon, Puerto Rico via Indian Hills College, Crum, a 6-2, 230-pound senior outfielder, is from Tucson, Ariz., and a transfer from the University of Arizona, and Eggleston, a 6-0, 195-pound junior outfielder, is from Las Vegas, Nev., by way of Pima College.