Southern Arkansas University
2006 Lady Mulerider Softball Preview

New Southern Arkansas University Head Coach Jamie Madewell is optimistic over the possibilities of her Lady Mulerider softball team heading into the 2006 season. Madewell came to Southern Arkansas after helping guide Delta State University to the 2005 Gulf South Conference West Division championship and tournament final as an assistant coach.

Madewell, the third coach of the SAU program, replaces Jennifer Pagani, who had a two-year record of 56-45 with the Lady Muleriders. Madewell will be assisted by former SAU player and current Graduate Assistant Coach Brittany Bennett.

Concerning the 2006 schedule, the new coach stated, “This year’s schedule will be quite challenging for us. We’ll be on the road a major part of the season, which is not the most ideal situation, so we’ll just have to become a great road team. Some of our big tournaments for the spring will be the St. Mary’s Tournament, UCA Spring Clash, and Florida Southern’s tournament, as well as our annual GSC Crossover in Decatur, Ala.”

In looking at the GSC West Division title chase Madewell feels that the West side of the conference continues to improve and move closer to taking the (overall) conference championship. “Some teams to look for on our side (the West) as tough competitors this year will be Delta State, Henderson State, and Arkansas-Monticello,” stated Madewell. “SAU has continually managed to fall in the top four at the end of each season to compete for the title. Two years ago, we (SAU) were in the overall championship finals, barely falling short to West Florida. Last year, we (the West) had a team in the championship finals again. The goal is to get back to the tournament, and see who shows up at that time.”

In regard to returning players, Madewell said, “Our returnees should be great leaders for our team this year. They have really (taken hold) to accomplishing our goals that we set for the season. It will take a great effort each day at practice and during games to accomplish all that we have set for ourselves. We have a very talented team…we just need to put it all together on a consistent basis.”

“We will be relying a great deal on our returning pitchers to make this a successful season,” stated Madewell. “We have three returnees in the circle this year in Kayla King, Cheyenne Savony, and Macie Astolfo. They each have different strengths and weaknesses that should complement each other. If these girls can stay healthy and confident, they will have a great year,” Madewell said.

“Offensively, we are returning some very strong bats in the lineup with Whitney Brannon, Tisha Thompson, King, and Savony. Two who have really shown up this fall at the plate were Kirstie Reed and Lauren Leonard. Kayla Sharp was standing on the left-side of the plate this fall, and I feel she is going to be more comfortable back on the right side this spring. She should see a great deal of time in the outfield, and hopefully, work her way into the batting lineup. We will need each one of these ladies to continue to work on their approach, and continue to help one another become great hitters,” the coach continued.

“This fall, we have really spent a lot of time on the mental approach to hitting. This has resulted in more quality at-bats and higher batting averages. I hope to see this trend continue throughout our spring season,” she added.

“In addition to our returning class, we have brought in some very talented young ladies. We have two junior transfers, Stephanie Beason, from Bossier Parish Community College, and Alicia Williams from East Texas Baptist University. Both of these student-athletes are very talented, and should see a great deal of playing time. They both have a great swing and will be expected to provide some good numbers for us this year. Beason will be our starting shortstop, and Williams will mostly serve as a designated hitter. Kristen Hall is a sophomore transfer from Hinds Community College. She was injured most of the fall, but is now healthy, and should contribute as a utility player. She will probably play several positions this spring. Her bat continues to improve daily, and she will be a great representative of SAU’s softball for the future,” the coach said.

“Our incoming freshmen have also surprised me with their hard work and commitment to our program. Erin Litvik and Elcia Olivo, both ended the fall with starting positions. Litvik was at first base/designated hitter, while Olivo was our starting right fielder. Litvik has a bat, and is continuing to work on her approach and practice efforts. Olivo’s hitting came around the last tournament of the fall, and I expect to see her continue to improve at the plate throughout the spring. Brittany Jo Mayer worked at third base and catcher, this fall, and will be expected to keep pushing to get in the starting lineup. After returning in good shape over the Christmas break, I know she will be pushing her teammates and herself the rest of the season,” Madewell said.