



RJ Reynolds High School

2010 RJR Demon Baseball Season Outlook

2009 was the year of “almosts”. 9-15 season record was almost good enough to make the state playoffs (less than 1 percentage point away from an appearance). 12, yes, 12 one-run ball games with only 6 victories – “almost” a record of 15-9! Only 4 games of the team’s losses were decided by more than 2 runs....almost, almost, almost! In 2010, the Demons hope to find a way to turn “almost” into victories!

The 2010 Demon baseball team features 6 seniors, 4 juniors, 1 sophomore, and 2 freshmen. Defensively, Coach Welch feels very confident. Pitching... Wise must be razor sharp each appearance. While others such as Royals, Anthony O’Neal, Kookken and Sykes must really step up every time called upon to toe the rubber. Offensively, Andrus is capable of having a monster year...but only if he can get help from the rest of the line-up, especially those with experience like Sykes, Wise, Kookken, Knotts, and Mauney. The newcomers must learn, adjust, and produce quickly. When Coach Welch is asked about the 2010 Demons, his response is always the same; “They are all great kids and extremely hard workers. They will work, and they will grind, and they take their talents to the limit. Regardless of our record, this will be a great team to coach.”

Craven Knotts – Senior -- 2010 has already been a huge year for Craven as he quarterbacked the Demon football squad to a 12-1 season. Coach Welch expects Craven’s leadership to be just as strong on the diamond as Knotts patrols centerfield. Craven’s speed is his weapon. He steals bases with ease and in doing so; he disrupts opponent’s game plan on a nightly basis. Defensively, Craven is a wizard... hits that come anywhere close to centerfield are automatic outs!. Knotts is a key component for the Demons as they hope to challenge for the CPC trophy in 2010.

Banks Kookken – Senior -- 2009 marked the beginning of Banks getting serious about baseball. He established he could play any position, including pitcher and catcher. 2010 looks bright for Kookken as he hopes to find a home at 2B and near the top of the Demon batting line-up. Kookken’s quick hands, quick bat, and daily consistency will be counted on to defeat the talented teams in the CPC.

Chase Mauney – Senior -- Chase and Coach Welch hope 2010 is injury free. Injuries have set Mauney back the last 2 years, and now are the fuels driving him to step-up and fight for a starting position in the Demon line-up. His 6'3" frame is quite intimidating as he roams 1st base and walks to the plate. If Mauney can stay healthy and harness his natural power, he will help the Demons fight for the trophy of the CPC.

Zach Royals – Senior -- the RJR coaching staff believes if Zach has a breakout year in 2010, the Demons will upset many of their talented opponents. 20 2/3 IP and 22Ks must be small numbers if Royals is to live up to the expectations of the Demon coaching staff. Along with pitching, Zach hopes to fight for a position in the OF or at 1B. "LEFTY" is a key component to the success of the 2010 RJR baseballers this season.

Jordan Sykes – Senior -- 2009 Rookie of the Year honors winner for the Demons. Sykes has totally dedicated himself in 2010 to the weight room 4 days a week at 7am since August. His dedication has turned into confidence and leadership... not to mention power, speed and arm strength! Sykes can play any position on the field, even at 6'3" 220lbs, Coach Welch would not hesitate to play him at shortstop. Power and leadership from Sykes will be vital as the Demons look for their first CPC title in 10 years.

Brandon Wise – Senior -- 2009 Golden Arm Award winner, Wise goes into the 2010 season as the "ACE" of the Demon pitching staff. Brandon commands 3 pitches and works very fast keeping opponents guessing and his teammates on their toes. Besides being the #1 starter, Wise's athleticism enables him to play any position on the field. Coach Welch knows Wise can pitch and play defense but offensively is still in question. Coach Welch hopes Wise can have a breakout season. If Wise becomes the complete player he is capable of, he undoubtedly will play a tremendous role in the Demons drive to the CPC championship.

Connor Andrus – Junior -- 2008 Rookie of the year, 2009 MVP and 2-time all-conference player, Andrus has made quite a reputation for himself. His gaudy numbers (.588 BA in 2010 conference play) were not a fluke ... and Coach Welch expects more-some huge numbers...and more power! Andrus has a head for the game and a passion that is contagious- passion and hard word make Connor the "tip of the spear" as the Demons prepare to battle all who oppose them in 2010.

Hayden O'Neal – Junior --2010 will be O'Neal's 1st year wearing the varsity colors, but he comes to the varsity with a co-JV MVP title from 2009. O'Neal will be counted on to toe the rubber and baffle hitters with his whip-like arm action. Besides pitching, he can play the corners and hopefully hit somewhere in the middle of the Demons line-up, where he will be expected to drive in a lot of runs. Hayden must help fill some big offensive holes that graduated in 2009. If he does just that, the Demons have a good shot to challenge for the CPC crown.

Henry Shepley – Junior -- 2010 marks the start of Henry's varsity baseball career at RJR. Henry has super bat speed and power and will have to use all his skill to crack the Demon batting line-up. Defensively, Henry will challenge for positions most likely somewhere in the Demon's OF. Coach Welch expects if Henry can start quickly and stay consistent he will truly be a factor as the Demons chase the elusive CPC trophy.

William Shepley – Junior -- 2010 will be William's 1st yr as a varsity player, and hopefully could be a breakthrough year for him. He had a great fall and summer and showed power and consistent solid contact at the plate. Coach Welch expects W. Shepley to really challenge either in the outfield or at 1B. If William's bat continues to crack hard line drives all over the field, he will find himself somewhere near the power slots in the Demon battling line-up, becoming a big part in the hunt for a conference title.

Will Cox – Sophomore --In 2010, Cox will receive his 2nd letter as he acquired valuable experience as a freshman in 2009 on the Demon varsity squad. He is very versatile and do not be surprised if he plays up to 7 different positions. Consistency at the plate will be the difference between a fill-in or a full-time starter. Cox is a "worker", and if it is within his reach he will work his way into the 2010 line-up each day. Coach Welch hopes this is Cox's breakout year casting him as a 3 yr. starter for the Demons.

Hunter Anthony – Freshman -- Hunter, RJR's newest lefty - and Coach Welch loves lefties - shows poise beyond his years on the mound. He could very likely baffle a lot of opposing line-ups with his late moving fastball and 12-6 curveball. If Hunter can throw strikes consistently, and let the solid RJR defense work behind him, Anthony will be a pleasant surprise to the 2010 Demon pitching staff as they steal the CPC crown away from the pre-season favorites.

Dean Vlasis – Freshman -- Vlasis hopes 2010 is not just a learning experience, but a year where he plays a major role as a freshman. Quick feet and sure hands put Vlasis somewhere in the Demon infield, maybe on opening day. A polished swing and good eye at the plate, also gives Dean an early shot at making the starting line-up, sooner than later. If Vlasis can be consistent in the field and stay positive, he will have 4 years of success and contribute to a lot of wins over the tough CPC teams.