

2003 EAST TENNESSEE STATE OUTLOOK

East Tennessee State baseball will have a very different look for the 2003 season following a 21-36 2002 campaign. The Buccaneers will have to replace nine seniors from last year, including **Jeremy Terry**, their starting shortstop for three years, and one of the best pitchers in the Southern Conference, right-handed starter **Reid Casey**, who is now pitching in the Cleveland Indians organization.

But the Buccaneers have a youthful enthusiasm coming into the season, with only three seniors on the squad and 11 newcomers. This team believes that it can make a lot of noise in this year's race for the Southern Conference championship. ETSU and head coach **Tony Skole** have added four transfers and seven true freshmen that, taking into consideration the surplus of young talent that is already on the club, are sure to make this season very exciting. "There is no doubt that we are very young, but this is the most talented and confident group of kids I have ever had here at ETSU," said Skole. "Fifteen of the 23 players on our roster are sophomores and freshmen. When we arrived at ETSU

we targeted these two recruiting classes, who at the time were high school juniors and sophomores. We were fortunate to convince these young men to come to ETSU to continue their education and baseball career. This will be a fun group to watch play over the next few years."

ETSU received stellar play from its freshmen last season, with players such as outfielder **Matt Traylor**, third baseman **Mike Giroud**, catcher **Caleb Moore** and second baseman **Justin Clear** turning heads with their offensive and defensive production. Unfortunately, the Bucs will be looking to replace Traylor's production, as he will miss the 2003 season with an injury. "Losing Matt for the season is a big blow, because our coaching staff felt that he could be one of the top players in our league this year," commented Skole. "We will look forward to having Matt back next year, meanwhile his injury opens the door for some other guys to have an opportunity to show what they can do."

Although the roster is comprised of a talented core of young players, the Bucs will be led this season by a group of talented juniors and seniors. Leading the way will be first baseman/designated hitter **Chad Boruff**, senior relief pitcher **Jarrold Hyder** and junior pitcher/centerfielder **Tim Turner**.

Boruff is a feared hitter who has exceptional power to all fields. He saw time at first base and designated hitter last season, and looks to do the same this season.

Hyder had a breakout season out of the bullpen in 2002, becoming one of the most dependable relief pitchers in the Southern Conference.

Turner has certainly caught the attention of professional scouts with a solid 2002 season at ETSU, then a spectacular season with the Wilson Tobs of the Coastal Plain League this past summer. The junior from Marietta, Ga., is a double threat, as he is an ace of the pitching staff as well as a dynamic outfielder.

Along with those three, junior pitcher **Josh Kite** is coming into his own after a solid summer season. **Willie McKenzie**, a senior right-handed pitcher who transferred from Louisville, will make an immediate impact, as will junior college transfer **Andy Howdeshell** who will anchor down one of the middle infield spots.

The Pitching Staff

The Buccaneers lost one of the all-time great pitchers at ETSU in Reid Casey but return two anchors in Hyder and Turner and three others in Kite, **Michael Bauer** and **Trevor Smith**. All three saw considerable action last season. Coach Skole and his staff have also brought in five newcomers who will definitely contribute on the hill in 2003. "This is the most talented and deep pitching staff we have had



Sophomore Mike Giroud will be a focal point of the Buccaneer attack

since I've been here at ETSU," said Skole. "We only have 11 arms on our staff, but all of them can pitch. We believe our pitching staff will be the strong point of our ball club."

After two good seasons of relief pitching in 2000 and 2001, Hyder was almost unhittable in 2002, posting a team-best 1.89 ERA and a 2-1 record. He began last season on a tear, not allowing an earned run in his first eight appearances, spanning 10.1 innings. All told, Hyder pitched 33.1 innings last season and allowed just seven earned runs. "It has been a pleasure to see Jarrod develop over the last three years," said Skole. "He has really learned how to pitch. Every bit of success that comes his way is very gratifying for me as a coach, because of how hard he has worked. He will play an important role in our success this year."

Many pro scouts will be watching Turner this season as he is poised to have a phenomenal season. He had a 3-7 record last season with a 6.59 ERA, but showed signs of dominance during the year. During a three-

game span in mid-season, Turner won three consecutive games, pitching 23 innings, striking out 31 batters, allowing 21 hits and walking just eight.

Following the 2002 season, Turner focused his attention on the Coastal Plain Collegiate Summer League. He was scintillating during the season, posting a 3-4 record, but with a 1.22 ERA, two complete games, one shutout and 95 strikeouts in 66.1 innings pitched. After the CPL season, Turner was voted third in the league's Top-10 Prospect List, voted on by the league coaches. When not on the mound, Turner will be a fixture in the outfield, where he is an accomplished centerfielder. "Tim has developed into one of the top pitching prospects in college baseball. Tim was very raw early in his career and survived on his exceptional athletic ability," said Skole. "Now Tim has learned to harness that ability and transferred it into his pitching. He can be flat out dominating at times. Tim should be one of the most exciting players to watch in our league this season."

Senior Willie McKenzie, a transfer from Louisville, is also expected to have a big impact on the Buccaneer team this season. A towering presence on the mound at 6-7, McKenzie appeared in 12 games, all in relief, last season for the Cardinals. He did not have a decision, posting a 5.19 ERA in 17.1 innings of work, striking out 15 batters. "Willie has gotten himself into the best shape of his life. He throws the ball



Junior Josh Kite has great stuff and can be overpowering on the hill

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Sophomore Mike Bauer is poised for a breakout season

very hard (consistently in the 92 -94 mph range) and has great command," said Skole. "If things click for Willie he could be a very dominant pitcher in our league."

Kite and sophomore **Michael Bauer** are two returning pitchers who will also compete for weekend starting spots. Both Kite and Bauer had exceptional summers in the Coastal Plain League and appear to be pitching the best they have in their career. "Josh and Michael are extremely talented young men," said Coach Skole. "Both of them have dominating stuff and hopefully will have breakout seasons. When Josh is on, he is the most dominating pitcher we have in our program. And Michael pitches consistently in the 90-93 mph range and throws all his pitches for strikes. Both of them will be keys to our success."

The rest of the pitching staff will be very young, comprised of freshmen and sophomores. Sophomores **Trevor Smith** and **Caleb Moore** will be counted upon to continue to make progress. Smith is developing into a very solid college pitcher and should see a lot of action out of the bullpen. Moore will do the majority of the catching, but will also see time on the mound as he throws in the 90-92 mph range. Talented freshmen **Steven Calicutt**, **Beau Alford**, **Jeremy Hall**, and **Shane Byrne** will all have to produce for the Bucs as true freshmen. Calicutt and Hall will be in the running for weekend starting spots, while Alford and Byrne will be counted on to come out of the pen. "Steven and Jeremy have a chance to be very good," said Skole. "Both of them are extremely talented and will win a lot of games for ETSU before their careers here are completed. We won't hold these two back. For us to be successful this year both of them will have to play important roles. Beau and Shane are two guys who I believe will surprise everyone. Both of them are competing for a spot in our lineup as position players, yet on the mound all they have ever done in their career is win. We will need them to have success on the mound for us this year."

The Infield

At the beginning of last season, there were many questions surrounding the Buccaneer infield. But after solid play from some young players, those questions do not exist prior to the 2003 campaign.

Boruff will be the senior leader of the infield, having started 135 games over the last three seasons. He will be the everyday first baseman. "Chad is in the best shape of his life and stronger than ever before. I believe he is poised to have a tremendous year," commented Skole. "He had a very productive summer in the Coastal Plain League and he is swinging the bat better than ever. Chad has as good a power as anyone in college baseball."

Also seeing time at first will be sophomore **Davis Burklin** and freshmen **Beau Alford** and **Blake Church**. Burklin saw action in 30 games in 2002. Church may be the best freshman hitting prospect to come through ETSU in recent years. Returning to the middle infield will be sophomore **Justin Clear**. Clear emerged as the starter at second base in 2002 as a true freshman and will likely be the starting short-

stop for the Bucs this spring. "Justin is a great worker," said Skole. "He has turned himself into a solid college baseball player, and we are counting on his leadership and consistent play to anchor our defense."

Newcomers to the middle infield are juniors **Andy Howdeshell** and **Troy Moock** and freshman **Shane Byrne**. Howdeshell was considered by many to be the top junior college infielder in Tennessee last year. All three players have the potential to be big-time run producers here at ETSU. Moock brings a veteran presence to the infield and Byrne is one of the top athletes in the entire school.

Sophomore **Mike Giroud** filled a huge hole in the Buccaneer infield when he stepped in as third baseman last season. He will have the same role this season after batting .318 in 2002. Giroud was an honorable mention freshman All-American last season. "Mike brings stability to our ball club," said Skole. "He is very solid defensively and is our most consistent hitter. We will need Mike to have a big year for us if we want to accomplish our goals this season."

The Outfield

The 2003 Buccaneer outfield will have a much different look from the 2002 edition, as ETSU will have two new starters to go with centerfield fixture Tim Turner. There will be no shortage of talent however, as the Bucs will have six other players who could see playing time in the outfield.

Turner will be starting in centerfield on days when he is not on the mound. With his speed and athleticism, he makes countless dynamic plays in the field. Prior to this season Turner was named as the top defensive outfielder, outfielder with the best arm and fastest base runner in the Southern Conference by *Baseball America*.

With the loss of Traylor, sophomore **Kevin Brotherton** and five newcomers will battle for playing time in the outfield. Junior **Bo Calloway** and Calicutt, Byrne, Alford and **Jordan Abromovitz** will get the opportunity to start alongside Turner. "There is great competition for those last two outfield spots," commented Skole. "All of these young men are very capable and should see action. Whoever is swinging the hot bat will get the nod for that day."

Catchers

ETSU enters the 2003 season with three catchers on its roster. It will be a young position for the Bucs, but as with other positions, there is no lack of experience behind the plate. Moore will be the everyday catcher, with freshmen **Blake Church** and **Justin Benard** also seeing time behind the dish. Both Church and Benard put up impressive offensive numbers in high school and could get playing time at designated hitter in 2003. "Caleb fought through some tough, nagging injuries last season," said Skole. "He has really worked hard over the winter and I believe he could explode and have a great year for us. I think he is one of the most underrated players in our league. If Caleb plays to his potential then he will be one of the top players in the Southern Conference."



Sophomore Justin Clear will look to build on a successful freshman season