MMC Baseball Looking To Get Back On Track

BY JEREMY HOECK jeremy.hoeck@yankton.net

This article appeared in the Feb. 17 edition of the Press & Dakotan. It has been updated to reflect the ongoing season.

For a program that has won 88 games, won a conference title and finished second in a span of three years, expectations were understandably high heading into the 2012 season for the Mount Marty College baseball program.

And for good reason. Mount Marty is coming off a 19-27 campaign a year ago — a decrease of 20 wins from the 2010 squad that won the Great Plains Athletic Conference (GPAC) title. So far this season (through

games as of April 4), the Lancers are 12-16 overall.

The goal this season? Get back to those contending ways. "We have a lot of people back, and experience is huge," senior shortstop Jason Schmidt said. "That shouldn't be a problem for us.

"With some of the new guys we have, if we can put it all together, we can be a really scary team."

That's where what happened in 2011 can help a team, head coach Andy Bernatow said. "This game has an ability to re-

ally humble you," the eighth-year coach said. "Last year was a good learning experience for us. The kids are eager to prove that's not where the program is at.

"Everyone knows the bar is higher than that."

To ensure the program bounces back, the Lancers will rely on nine seniors whose careers have coincided with the successful 3-year run.

Highlighting that veteran group will be Jason Schmidt, the reigning GPAC Player of the Year and preseason NAIA All-American. The Mitchell native led Mount Marty in home runs (13) and RBI (53) last season, and also went 2-0 with



BERNATOV

three saves as the team's closer. Hopefully he can keep getting bet-A potential Major League ter. prospect, Schmidt is batting .329 At the other two positions with two home runs and 18 RBI so

third base and catcher — Mount Marty will see a few new faces. Yankton native Derrik Nelson

(So.), who had only 18 at-bats last year, figures to start at third, but will also see significant time on the mound. At catcher, the Lancers will use Brock Thomas (So., 6 atbats), Kyler Pekarek (Jr.) and Connor Kortan (Fr.).

The outfield will be anchored by left-fielder Justin Kemp (Sr., .289, 24 hits, 9 RBI), who has started over 120 career games. Nathan Roche (Sr., .295, 7 RBI) will start in center and Mathias Godsil (Jr., .344, 21 hits, 13 RBI) will man right field.

Zach Hollenbeck (Fr.), Tyler Edler (So.) and Ryan Buck (Fr.) could also see time in right as well, according to Bernatow.

DID YOU KNOW

Jason not only loves play-ing baseball, he loves to um-

He was a 2012 NAIA Pre-season All-American. He

was also an honorable men

tion All-American in 2011. • He was the 2011 GPAC Player of the Year. He has

twice been named 1st team all-GPAC.

· He is currently in radiologic

pire it as well.

In terms of other utility players who will play key roles, the Lancers will use Allen Hemeyer (Sr., .242, 9 RBI) and Mike Johnson (Jr., .245, 4 RBI). Senior Sam Sparen will redshirt.

When it comes to who's on the mound, the goal was simple, Bernatow said - the team had to improve.

'We had one of the best fall workouts I've ever seen," said Bernatow, whose staff had a 6.37 ERA last year. "We knew we had to get a little better on the mound."

Dominic Wieseler (So., 3-2, 3.41 ERA this season) will again assume the role of staff 'ace,' while Josh Engquist (Sr., 2-2, 2.18 ERA) and Hemeyer (2-3, 3.52 ERA) will also see significant innings. Nelson (1-1, 3.86 ERA) will also be counted on.

A pair of newcomers will give the Lancers a deeper feel this season. Cassidy Key-Darlington (3-1,

Turns out, Lori Schmidt was on to something.

There was some talk last spring that her son would be drafted by a Major League Baseball organization in the 2011 Draft. Ultimately, Jason was not selected.

As far as this spring? There's probably a better chance he'll land some sort of professional

gig. "Hopefully he gets taken. He deserves it," Livermont said. He's one of the best players I've ever played with; I can always tell people that when I leave college.

"I can say, 'Hey, I played with probably one of the best in South Dakota.'



HEMEYER • SR • P/DH

4.55 ERA), a junior from Big Bend

Community College (Wash.), and

Josh Cleveland (0-0, 4.15 ERA), a

junior from Itasca Community Col-

lege (Minn.), bring plenty of expe-

week, which is not always the case

with some weekend-heavy teams."

Picked to finish fifth in the

Lancers figure to again be tested

bid. Three schools — Doane,

GPAC pre-season coaches poll, the

for their conference championship

Northwestern and Hastings - tied

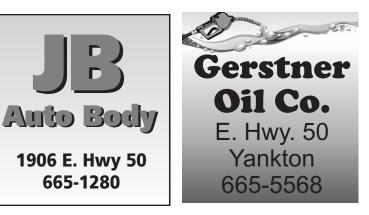
for the regular season crown last year.

Being tabbed is certainly different from the pre-season No. 1 selection a year ago for the Lancers.

"Last year, we had that 'X' on our back," Schmidt said. "We were the team to beat. Everyone brought their 'A' game against us. Pre-season stuff doesn't mean a whole lot, to be honest, but we're ready to make a move."

Still, with Doane the pre-season favorite, the league race figures to be wide open, Bernatow said.

"We know Doane has the potential to be very good; they're just well-rounded. They've got experience," he said. "Even with how good Doane is, I don't think they'll run away with it.



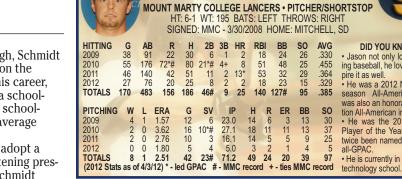
Schmidt

From Page 1

If that wasn't enough, Schmidt has been even better on the mound. Throughout his career, his record is 8-1 with a schoolrecord 22 saves and a schoolbest 2.67 earned run average (ERA).

Not exactly one to adopt a domineering or threatening presence on the mound, Schmidt says he has still learned to accept his role as a shut-down

closer. "When coach Bernatow recruited me, he wanted me strictly a closer. That was totally new to me," Schmidt said. "I didn't get a chance to close games



far this season.

very solid there."

More than just Schmidt, the

starter in Jason Livermont at sec-

ond base. Livermont (.253, 8 RBI)

sports adage about titles and in-

"The goal is for (Schmidt) to

Lancers boast another 4-year

allows MMC to fulfill a certain

field defense, Bernatow said.

continue what he's done, but I

think we're stronger around him," Bernatow said. "Championship

teams are built up the middle, and

we've had success because we're

return Jared Miller (So., .366, 34

hits, 1 HR, 18 RBI) at first base.

teams not pitching around me,'

Schmidt said. "He's dangerous.

"Jared has a lot to do with

Around the infield, the Lancers

we got him," Bernatow said. "We could see him being a good player, but he's been amazing with what he's done at every spot."

Sure, Schmidt could have spurned Mount Marty for a bigwell, size wouldn't necessarily matter.

SO

.330

.350 .455 .364 .329

"I had offers from other colleges, but I'd rather play for four years for a great coach, instead of sitting on the bench and maybe getting a shot down the

rience, Bernatow said. Key-Darlington has the potential to be one of the best pitchers in the GPAC and one of the school's all-time greats, according to Bernatow. "We have a 6-man fight to get in that 4-man conference rotation," he said. "We'll be really strong mid-

in high school; I didn't know how should be out there.'

From Mount Marty's perspective, the timing was perfect. Since Schmidt has arrived on the scene, the Lancers have posted a record of 96-76, including the magical run in 2010 when the program came within one win of the NAIA World Series.

"We felt pretty excited when

first chiropractic FiRSt (605)665-8073 (605)665-6643 Dr. Sheila Fitzgerald Dr. Jim Fitzgerald Dr. Tom Stotz • Dr. TJ Stotz 2509 Fox Run Parkway, Yankton

www.firstchiropracticcenter.com

Full Service Salon The Cutting **Crew** LLC 409 Cedar St. • Yankton (605)664-4400 Walk-Ins Welcome (Located one block north of Cotton Oil in with

Mike Lemon Insurance)

Edward **Jones**

MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING Member SIPC

ww.edwardiames.com



Wayne Ibarolle Financial Advise 220 West 3rd Yankton, SD 57078 65-4567

Devin Anderson Financial Adviser 508 West 23rd #1 Yankton, SD 57078 665-7912



Calvin D. Riesgaard Financial Adviser 508 West 23rd #1 Yankton, SD 57078 665-7912

ger school, or could have gone the junior college route and potentially transferred to a Division I school after two years. Instead, he signed with one of the smallest schools in the region – knowing full well if he played

212 Walnut

road somewhere," Schmidt said. "I don't regret it at all.

"My mom seriously tells me all the time, 'If you're good enough, you'll get noticed.' I have to credit to her on that one; she's right."



Dr. Jeff Liudahl (left) and

YANKTON'S EAR, NOSE & THROAT EXPERTS



Using the latest technology, Dr.'s Liudahl and Rumsey offer advanced care of the head and neck.

Avera 赤 Medical Group Ear, Nose & Throat Yankton

Call (605) 665-6820

for appointments.

409 Summit St., Yankton, SD • (605) 665-6820

1-800-KIL-BUGS

Serving all of South Dakota

No matter where your final resting place may be...

Opsahl-Kostel Funeral Home & Crematory is there for you.



Kevin P. Opsahl **Funeral Director**

Our compassion knows no boundaries. We serve all churches. all faiths, all cemeteries.



Memorial Resource Center, Tyndall · Memorial Chapels, Tabor & Menno 665-9679 · 1-800-495-9679 · www.opsahlkostelfuneralhome.com



Tami Keller **Funeral Director**





Olson's uses Pestpro Thermal heating systems for Bedbugs. **TECHNICIANS**

Fireplaces and wood burning stoves were responsible for some 23,600 residential fires.

> PR Olsen **Certified Chimney Sweeps** Certified Dryer Exhaust Technicians

Call for an appointment today! 665-5181 • 1-800-545-2847

