

Jones Nets First Recruiting Class at ASU

Written by Staff Reports

Thursday, 20 December 2012 08:31

First-year Appalachian State University baseball head coach Billy Jones unveiled his initial recruiting class at Appalachian State on Wednesday, a group of 14 student-athletes that will enroll at Appalachian

next fall and take the field for the Mountaineers in 2014. Jones' first class consists of 11 current high-school seniors and three from the junior-college ranks. Ten of the 14 recruits hail from North Carolina.

"Our main focus and objective coming in as a new coaching staff was to evaluate our team we had and to recognize our immediate needs," Jones said. "The recruiting process is an ongoing staple of all great programs. We feel we made a big step forward in signing athleticism in this class. The young men coming in not only possess the skill set to compete but have great make-up as well, as you have to have young men that can handle the daily grind this game demands of you."

"Assistant coaches Michael Rogers and Matt Payne were diligent and did an outstanding job of staying the course to find speed and athleticism as well as the right type of person we wanted in the program," Jones continued. "Our support staff here at Appalachian State did tremendous job once our recruits arrived on campus. It goes without saying that our academic staff of Jean Roberts and Jonathan Reeder were amazing, as were our strength coach Robbie Ormsby, trainer Josh Porter and athletic director Charlie Cobb, all taking the time to visit with the student-athletes and their families. The people involved in the program take great pride in the development of our athletes both on and off the field."

BRIAN BAUK (OF/RHP, 6-0, 180, Salisbury, N.C./Salisbury)

Three-time all-conference honoree ... hit .308 as a freshman and .350 as a sophomore before exploding for a .424 average as a junior last season ... rated the 25th-best player in North Carolina by Perfect Game ... coached at Salisbury by Scott Maddox ... has played summer ball for the South Charlotte Panthers (coach Don Hutchins) and the Rowan County American Legion team (coach Jim Gantt), which advanced to the district finals this past summer ... also excels on the gridiron as an all-conference and all-county quarterback ... was named Salisbury's team MVP after rushing for more than 900 yards and passing for over 700 as a senior this fall ... father, Michael, played baseball at Catawba and grandfather, Steve Bauk, played at George Washington.

"(Brian is) one of the best pure athletes to come through the SCP program. (He possesses) speed, arm strength and quickness. (He was a) two-sport star in high school. With a full-time focus on baseball, the ceiling for Brian is very high. He could be a true two-way contributor with the ability to pitch and play the outfield at a high level. (His) left-handed bat with sub-4.0

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(speed) to first base puts a lot of pressure on defenses. Reps and developing strength should translate into future gap power."

-Don Hutchins, South Charlotte Panthers

MATT BRILL (OF/RHP, 6-2, 185, Coal Valley, Ill./Moline)

Hit .384 with a home run and 22 RBI as a junior last spring, en route to all-conference, all-metro and team MVP honors ... also struck out 31 in 15.2 innings as a pitcher in 2012 ... coached by Craig Schimmel ... hit .362 with 10 doubles, seven triples, six home runs and 42 RBI for American Legion Post 246 in Moline, Ill. this past summer, en route to being named the team's Rookie of the Year ... helped lead Post 246 (coach James Zacherwicz) to 2012 American Legion World Series ... also a three-year letterwinner in soccer and lettered once in basketball ... will join high-school teammate Dallas DeVrieze as the first Illinois products to wear the Black and Gold in a decade (Joe Norton - 2001-04) ... grandfather, Lloyd Brill, played

professionally in the New York Giants' farm system.

"In my opinion Matt has a chance to be an impact player at the next level. He is an outstanding athlete that possesses all five tools on the baseball field. Appalachian State is getting a high-quality player, student and person."

- Craig Schimmel, Moline High School

DALLAS DeVRIEZE (LHP, 6-2, 165, Moline, Ill./Moline)

Put together an 8-3 record as a junior last spring, en route to all-metro accolades ... coached by Craig Schimmel ... went 8-3 this past summer to help lead Post 246 (coach James Zacherwicz) to 2012 American Legion World Series ... boasts a combined 47-4 record during his high school/summer ball careers ... is also a three-time all-metro honoree in golf ... will join high-school teammate Matt Brill as the first Illinois products to wear the Black and Gold in a decade (Joe Norton - 2001-04).

"Dallas is your typical crafty left-handed pitcher. He has excellent control and uses his off-speed pitch nicely. Dallas is a great leader on and off of the field and is an excellent student.

Appalachian State is getting a quality student-athlete."

- Craig Schimmel, Moline High School

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A.J. FARRIS (IF, 6-2, 190, Lawrenceville, Ga./Collins Hill/Louisburg College)

Played 44 games as a freshman at Marshall University last spring, making 30 starts ... went 5-for-9 with five RBI during first collegiate weekend at USA Baseball Complex in Cary, N.C., driving in two runs in debut versus Canisius and three more in 16-2 win over Bryant later that day ... hit a grand slam for his first collegiate home run during a 13-5 win at Gardner-Webb ... finished first collegiate campaign with 14 RBI and 11 runs scored ... transferred to Louisburg College (Louisburg, N.C.) during the offseason and will play there as a sophomore in 2013 ... coached at Louisburg by Keith Shumate ... played summer ball for the Carolina Cubs (coach Mike Myers) ... was a preseason Under Armour all-American as high-school senior after hitting .392 as a junior ... coached at Collins Hill H.S. by Paul Pierce ... father, Adrian, played baseball at Villanova.

"A.J. is a wonderful talent whose work ethic makes his best days still ahead. He is a great student and teammate with all the tools necessary to be an impact player."

- Keith Shumate, Louisburg College

AVERY JACKSON (IF, 5-11, 170, Ether, N.C./East Montgomery)

Hit .449 with 10 doubles, three home runs, 22 RBI and 37 runs scored en route to being named team MVP as a junior last spring ... two-time all-conference selection ... helped lead team to state quarterfinals in 2012 ... coached by Sean Hassell ... played for Randolph County Post 45 American Legion team (coach Ronnie Pugh) the past two summers ... hit .346 with 10 doubles, three home runs, 21 RBI and 45 runs scored for Post 45 in 2012 ... has helped lead team to back-to-back area championship game appearances and the third round of the 2012 American Legion state tournament ... is also a football standout with 1,840 passing yards and 22 total touchdowns (18 passing, four rushing) over the past two seasons ... was a two-year team captain on the gridiron and the team MVP as a sophomore.

"Avery Jackson is a natural athlete with a superior work ethic. He can play any position on the baseball field and has the ability to take over a game and will his team to win. Appalachian State has acquired a real gem in Avery and (he) will make an impact on the success of the program."

- Sean Hassell, East Montgomery High School

MARKEL JOHNSON (OF, 5-11, 190, Greensboro, N.C./Westchester Country Day)

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Earned all-state recognition after hitting .438 with 14 doubles, five triples, seven home runs, 23 stolen bases and only two strikeouts as a junior last spring ... three-time all-conference honoree ... received school's 2012 Wildcat Award ... coached by Joey Hammond ... is a member of Dirtbags summer/fall program (coach Andy Partin).

"Appalachian State fans will enjoy the athleticism Markel brings to the Mountaineer baseball program. He's got an infectious smile and charisma and he obviously loves to be on the field and around his teammates. His best tools are his running speed and his ability to find the barrel with some juice. He's a tough guy to defend because he's got good raw power but infielders have to really respect his ability to scoot down the baseline. He can cause a lot of chaos on the bases and really disrupt an opposing team. I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to coach Markel with the Dirtbags. He was a big piece to our fifth-place finish in Jupiter, Fla. this past October. I see great things for him at Appalachian State and beyond."
- Andy Partin, Dirtbags Baseball Club

ZACK LITTELL (RHP, 6-4, 200, Mebane, N.C./Eastern Alamance)

Went 10-2 as a junior last spring, en route to all-conference honors while helping lead Eastern Alamance to North Carolina eastern regional final ... also hit .405 as a junior ... was the only sophomore on Eastern Alamance's varsity roster as a sophomore ... is a two-time academic all-conference honoree ... coached by Randy Ballard ... was selected to play for Boston Red Sox Scout Team at the 2012 South Atlantic Border Battle ... played summer ball for the EvoShield Canes (coach Jeff Petty) ... helped lead Canes to first-place finish at 2012 Firecracker Classic at Wake Forest and third-place finish at WWBA World Championship in Jupiter, Fla. ... also named all-conference in football and helped lead team to N.C. 3-A state championship game as a sophomore.

"Zack is a big physical 6-4 RHP that will sit in the 89-91 range with his fastball with a power 12-to-6 breaking ball and a feel for (his) change-up. (He is a) definite pro prospect and even better person."

- Jeff Petty, EvoShield Canes

BRADLEY MORTON (OF, 6-2, 180, Winston-Salem, N.C./Mount Tabor/Louisburg College)

Hit .493 with 20 doubles, two triples, five home runs, 27 RBI, 40 runs scored and 25 stolen bases as a senior at Mount Tabor in 2011 ...hit .420 with 15 doubles, seven home runs and 31 RBI as a junior ... three-time all-conference and all-county honoree ... MVP of 2010 Forsyth

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County Tournament and 2010 Impact Baseball Futures Game ... coached by Mike Lovelace ... played as a prep with 2012 Appalachian State freshman all-American Jamie Nunn ... will play as a sophomore at Louisburg in 2013 and have two seasons of eligibility remaining when he suits up for the Mountaineers in 2014.

"Bradley has been the benchmark in the SCP program for athleticism. (He was a) three-sport star in high school. With his focus now on baseball, he continues to elevate to a top-tier talent. Bradley has gap power at the plate and will run some balls out of the yard."

- Don Hutchins, South Charlotte Panthers

PAYTON SMITH (RHP, 6-0, 180, RHP, Alpharetta, Ga./Milton)

Posted a 0.96 ERA as a junior last spring, the lowest ERA in his region ... was a first-team all-region honoree ... coached by Joey Ray ... also plays for the East Cobb Yankees 18-U team (coach James Beavers) ... helped lead Yankees to a 48-8 record this past summer and the 2012 Perfect Game national championship.

"Payton is a competitor on the mound. No matter the situation, he wants the baseball when the game is on the line. He has a good fastball that he likes to elevate in certain counts and one of the best breaking balls in Georgia in the '13 class. He is the backbone of a very strong pitching staff at Milton."

- Joey Ray, Milton High School

TYLER STROUP (OF, 5-9, 170, Thomasville, N.C./East Davidson)

Hit .456 as a junior last spring, including a .650 average in conference games ... named conference Most Valuable Player and co-Player of the Year ... two-time all-conference honoree ... hit a grand slam in the second round of the state playoffs versus East Lincoln ... coached by Dan Tricarico ... plays summer/fall ball with Yak Baseball (coach Chris Smith) ... hit .328 this past summer, .364 last fall and .453 in the summer of 2011 for Yak ... great great uncle, George "Fluffy" Watts was an all-America football player at Appalachian State in 1941, played professionally for the Washington Redskins and was inducted into Appalachian's Athletics Hall of Fame in 1976.

"(Tyler) is an impact player that performs at a very high level and gives 100 percent on and off the field. He is a fast outfielder, has a strong arm and great bat. Tyler has always been a team leader and has always been easy to coach. The other Yak coaches are sad to see him leave the program but (it) has been awesome watching growing over the last five years into the player he is today!"

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- Chris Smith, Yak Baseball

TRAVIS TUTTLE (RHP, 6-1, 180, Pfafftown, N.C./Reagan)

Went 4-1 with a 2.89 ERA as a junior last spring ... is also a .314 career hitter with a .407 on-base percentage ... coached by Gary Nail ... was one of 20 North Carolina prep stars selected to play for the Boston Red Sox scout team at the 2012 South Atlantic Border Battle ... was a member of the Kansas City Royals scout team this fall ... played summer ball for Yak Baseball (coach Chris Smith).

"(Travis) has an electric arm on the mound with some good stuff. He has also been a leader on and off the field for our program. Travis is a absolute workhorse during the season looking to get better. I've watched him over the last two years going from low 80s on the mound to upper 80s, bumping 90. Travis is another player that it has been great to have and (we are) sad to see him leave."

- Chris Smith, Yak Baseball

LUKE WATTS (RHP, 6-2, 180, Taylorsville, N.C./Alexander Central)

Went 8-2 on the mound and hit .440 as a junior last spring ... coached by Jerry Whittman ... went 7-3 this past summer for Heat Showcase team (coach Pete Hardee — Appalachian State Athletics Hall of Famer) ... threw three two-hitters for the Heat ... is also a two-year letterwinner in basketball ... cousin, Mark Ivey, played football at Appalachian State and is currently a member of the Mountaineers' football coaching staff.

"Luke is a great young man with a tremendous work ethic. His body has allowed him to have a high ceiling. He is very good around the plate and likes to pound the zone. (He) also has tremendous movement on his pitches. He is (the) type of player that likes to compete at the highest level."

- Jimmy Bowman, Heat Showcase

ROBERT WHALEY (RHP, 6-1, 215, Hickory, N.C./Hickory/Catawba Valley C.C.)

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Went 5-2 with seven saves to help lead Catawba Valley C.C. to Region 10 championship and Junior College World Series in 2012 ... worked 63 innings with 78 strikeouts and 1.73 ERA en route to first-team all-region honors as a freshman last spring ... coached at CVCC by Frank Pait ... was a two-time all-conference selection at Hickory H.S. ... named team MVP as a senior ... coached at Hickory by David Craft ... was a member of Dirtbags summer/fall program (coach Andy Partin).

"(Robert is) a great player who is an even better person. (He is) one of the most competitive, hard-nosed players I have ever coached. (He) will be a great fit at App State"

- Fran Pait, Catawba Valley Community College

DRAKE ZUPCIC (OF, 6-1, 175, Waxhaw, N.C./Cuthbertson)

Four-year letterwinner at Cuthbertson H.S. ... helped lead Cavaliers to 26-5 overall record and 13-1 conference mark last spring ... coached by Travis Little ... plays summer/fall ball for the South Charlotte Panthers (coach Don Hutchins) ... brother of current Appalachian State all-conference outfielder Tyler Zupcic ... father, Bob Zupcic, played four seasons in the Major Leagues with the Boston Red Sox and Chicago White Sox, hitting .250 with seven home runs and

80 RBI in 319 career major-league games.

"Drake has a chance to follow in his the footsteps of his brother, SCP alumnus and Appalachian State outfielder Tyler. (Drake is) a plus outfielder with excellent speed and instincts. He has only been playing at a high level for a year due to foot issues and continues to elevate in all aspects of his development. (He) projects to be a bigger, stronger version of (his) brother Tyler with similar speed and aggressiveness. Drake led the SCP 2013 team in stolen bases in 2012."

- Don Hutchins, South Charlotte Panthers