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## College baseball notes: Lincoln Land aims for high seed in regional tourney

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April was a red-hot month for the Lincoln Land Community College Loggers baseball team.

LLCC had 16 wins in the 21 games it played in April. Victories have been harder to come by in May. The Loggers are 2-4 so far this month, but they're still a contender for next week's National Junior College Athletic Association Division II Region 24 tournament.

"We're still continuing to get timely hitting," LLCC coach Ron Riggle said. "The last two series were against Heartland and Danville, two of the better teams in the league. We had some very competitive games.

"A couple guys had good pitching performances. Ross Hager threw a great game against Danville Saturday. He had a two-hit shutout in the second game (a 2-0 victory). Devin Moore threw well against Danville in (a 10-5 loss Sunday). It was tied when he left the game."

The Region 24 winner is the Midwest District champion and advances to the Division II World Series in Enid, Okla. The Loggers are on track to earn a high seed for the regional competition.

"We are tied for the third seed for the regional tournament right now with John Wood," Riggle said. "John Wood has to play Parkland, and we do hold the tiebreaker. We beat them two out of three."

Regional pairings will be released early next week for the Region 24 tourney, which begins Thursday and runs through May 23 at Lanphier Park and Lincoln Land.

The top two regional seeds will most likely go to defending national champion Parkland and Heartland. Parkland is ranked No. 5 and Heartland is No. 7 in the NJCAA Division II national poll.

All that's left in the regular season for the Loggers (26-21 overall, 17-10 in the Mid-West Athletic Conference) is a three-game series Friday and Saturday against Shawnee.

### **Bulldogs gear up for postseason, too**

The Springfield College in Illinois Bulldogs have had an up-and-down season but may have found their groove.

SCI have won six of its last seven games heading into its final regular-season series. The Bulldogs (24-22, 13-14) play Lewis & Clark on Friday and Saturday.

"I like the way we've been competing the last 15 or so games," SCI coach Steve Torricelli said. "Although we have not won them all, we have competed hard and with a lot more confidence. We've been able to put runs up. The pitchers have done a good job of limiting walks and mistakes on the mound.

"The turnaround started when Parkland beat us 12-9. We were right there with them. They got a big hit when they needed it and we didn't."

### **UIS baseball roster grows**

The roster for the University of Illinois Springfield Prairie Stars first-year baseball program is nearly complete.

Coach Brian Grunzke has added 11 players this spring — five with local ties — bringing the total number of recruits to 17.

Sacred Heart-Griffin's Will Pufundt and Prairie View Stevenson's Ted Heiser are left-handed hitters and infielders among the eight high school seniors in Grunzke's latest group of signees. Rochester's Seth Warren, Auburn's Jeremy Ator, Crystal Lake South's Easton Kowalski and Edwardsville's Bill McFarland are right-handed pitchers. Trevor Johnson is an infielder from Catholic Memorial High in Waukesha, Wis.

Two players have previous college experience. Paul Phillips is a right-handed pitcher who played at Kankakee Community College. Infielder and Williamsville graduate Clint Jeffers last played at SCI in 2008.

Jeffers and fellow recruit Ryan Williams, a Chatham Glenwood graduate and son of UIS women's golf coach Nichole Inkel-Pongracz, are currently enrolled at UIS. Williams is a switch-hitting catcher.

Galesburg senior infielder Jake Henderson will join the team as an invited walk-on.

The Prairie Stars' six fall recruits were Lincoln infielder Hayden Cosby, Bartonville Limestone pitcher Barry Arnett, Princeton catcher Reid Clary, Naperville Central's Matt Cmiel, Washington infielder Marshall Escue and Lincoln College sophomore outfielder Nate Blessman.

Grunzke expects to sign one or two more players for the squad, which will take the field for the first time next spring.

The former NCAA Division I assistant coach has been hard at work since he assumed his position in August. He already has received the players' uniforms and caps.

"Basically, the schedule is done for 2011 with 50 games," he said. "I'm trying to secure a practice field. We're still working on a game field. Hopefully in the next couple weeks we can get that finalized."

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