





## Grunzke, Stars finally ready to take the field

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The time has finally arrived.

Brian Grunzke was hired in 2009 to start up the University of Illinois Springfield baseball team, which plays its inaugural game Friday against Kentucky State in Alcorn, Miss.

"We're all looking forward to Friday," Grunzke said. "It's been a process and it will be a process though the whole year. The guys are excited to be part of history."

The Prairie Stars roster features 35 players from Illinois, Wisconsin, New York and Minnesota who spent many weeks during the fall working with Grunzke. The largest group of players by far is the freshman class with 24. There are seven juniors, three seniors and one sophomore.

"I'm feeling anxious to play and see the team get out there and compete, and see where we can go from there," said Grunzke, who was an assistant coach at Northern Iowa before UIS.

With so many players, the competition is on for playing time.

"There are still some pitching spots," Grunzke said. "There are 10 or 11 guys that are going to throw.

"There's still good competition going on as far as our position areas. That probably won't be decided until three or four weeks into the season."

UIS plays its home opener March 26 against Indianapolis in a 1 p.m. contest at Chatham Community Park, where the Stars will play for the 2011 and 2012 seasons.

For an earlier look at UIS, Robert Morris plays host to the Stars at 2 p.m. Tuesday at Chamberlain Park.

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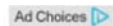
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