





Softball should be a good experience for Prairie Stars in 2011

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THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

Posted Feb 23, 2011 @ 11:41 PM

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The word that sums up the University of Illinois Springfield Prairie Stars softball team is experience.

The squad features eight returning players, including five seniors.

"The team chemistry is some of the best we've ever had," UIS coach Mat Mundell said. "That's going to be a key factor for us. We're seeing a little more competitive fire out of this girls than we have in past."

The Stars had records of 14-32 overall and 6-22 in the Great Lakes Valley Conference in 2010.

Mundell hopes for carry-over from last year. UIS kicks off the season Friday against Arkansas-Monticello in Bentonville, Ark.

"Offensively, I'm very excited," he said. "One through nine, we're going to be able to do some more things than last year. We're going to be able to be more aggressive on the base paths and hit for a lot better average."

"We return our three and four hitters. With the addition of the new girls, we're going to be able to score some runs."

The team batting average was .241 last year.

Senior catcher/infielder Brittany Morgan fueled the Stars with a .328 average and 28 runs batted in last year. Sophomore infielder Brooke Carroll followed at .310 with 25 RBIs. Senior utility player Ashley Sanders posted a .286 batting average.

UIS also returns experience on the mound. Senior Alexandra Newbern (2-9, 4.24 earned run average), junior Aubrey Watson (5-4, 4.83) and sophomore Tina Buck (1-6, 5.58) are back.

"Pitching is going to be a strength," he said. "We have six pitchers on the roster this year. This is the most we've ever had and it gives us a lot of flexibility and opportunity."

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