

SIUE baseball to play fall games, adds 14 to roster

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EDWARDSVILLE – Fall practice is underway for SIUE baseball, and the Cougars are gearing up for a pair of fall exhibition games this week. SIUE will play host to Saint Louis Wednesday and Missouri-St. Louis Friday. Among his roster, Head Coach [Sean Lyons](#) will have 14 new student-athletes at his disposal for the two games.

"It's been an exciting fall with so many newcomers," Lyons said. "With that comes a lot of teaching. We have nine freshman, and we are trying to instill a system of how we do things here. It makes each day fresh."

The nine freshman include infielders Brendan Ryan (Leawood, Kansas), Brett Pierson (Carrollton, Missouri) and Brady Bunten (Cedar Rapids, Iowa), outfielder Jack Rigoni (Naperville, Illinois), catchers Jackson Caley (Pleasant Hill, Missouri) and Dylan Hildebrand (Columbia, Illinois) and pitchers Adam Drewry (O'Fallon, Illinois), Blake Struble (Carrollton, Illinois) and Cameron Prayer (Creve Coeur, Missouri).

Five junior college transfers also have been added to the roster. That group includes infielder Raul Elguezabal (St. Louis/Jefferson College), outfielder Dylan Burris (Edwardsville/Wabash Valley CC), pitchers Brian Chandler (Bonne Terre, Missouri/Wabash Valley CC), Cole Milam (Waterloo, Illinois/Jefferson College) and utility player Justin Perkins (St. Charles, Missouri/Jefferson College).

Lyons explained the teaching isn't just about the game of baseball.

"In the fall you are laying out expectations of how you want your program to be known," he said. "That is fun for us as a staff."

Lyons added that older, established players also are taking on a teaching role.

"To have your veterans take on leadership and take an active role in helping the new guys is great," Lyons added. "Several of our veteran guys have really stepped up, guys like a [Dustin Woodcock](#) or a [Brock Weimer](#). Guys on the pitching staff, [Tyler Hutchinson](#), [David Llorens](#), [Kenny Serwa](#) have really played an active role in wanting to continue the growth of the program. That has made our job easier."

Lyons said there is a lot to like about the incoming class of recruits.

"One thing you'll notice is the overall athleticism," he said. "We have quite a few position players who really bring the dynamic of team speed. That was an area where we felt we needed to get better. We want to put pressure on the defense from an offensive side, and these guys have the ability to do that."

"On the junior college side, we have brought in guys with some experience," Lyons continued. "Three of our guys came from Jefferson College, a team that went to the JUCO World Series, so you're getting guys who know how to win."

The Cougars will play fall baseball games for the first time under Lyons.

"It's a great opportunity for us to play another opponent," Lyons said. "You are facing another set of arms that you haven't already seen two or three times this fall and seeing another lineup that offers another skill set. This is true for our pitchers and for defense. Everything will be a little bit quicker than it is on a normal practice day. We have three

freshman infielders who are really trying to figure out the speed of the game at the Division I level."

This season, for the first time, the NCAA is allowing schools to play fall baseball games without counting against the program's number of spring games.

"Being able to play these two games, for every program across the country, is huge in the development of your team," Lyons said. "To have Saint Louis and UMSL be just 30 minutes away where they can just pop over is great."

Lyons also said the two fall games will help the staff learn about the players they have.

"We're looking forward to these two games to really give us an idea of what our identity could be," he said. "We have to mix and match some veterans with some younger guys and see how it all gels and see how it looks together. We're going to get the opportunity to put nine guys out there and then substitute guys in and out to find the right combination."

Both games will be played at Roy E. Lee Field at Simmons Baseball Complex. First pitch is scheduled for 5 p.m. Admission is free.