

NEWS

Rockville gets ready for Express

By Joe Slaninka
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Summer is just around the corner which means Rockville Express baseball will soon be in full swing.

Coming off a not-so-stellar 2008 season that earned them a spot near the bottom of the final standings, the Express is looking to bounce back to their winning ways in 2009.

The Express' skipper, Jim Pereira, in his second year with the team, said he did not have much input in player selection last year because the roster was already set when he was hired, but after a full year under his belt, this year he practically took over the recruiting right off the bat, he said.

Pitcher Austin Hurd of

Gaithersburg returns this summer in his second season with the Express. The right-hander plays for Towson University's baseball team. Pereira said he looks forward to working with him again.

Pereira said Ryan Geffert, a Division II All-American from Southern Connecticut University, could have a huge impact on the team's success this year as well.

Another right-handed pitcher Mike Couch is a notable player to keep an eye on this season. The sophomore, from Menlo Park, California, plays for Santa Clara Junior College.

"You just don't know," Pereira said, "since most the team has never played together. It all depends on how they click on the field and how they gel with the coaching staff."

Last year the team finished with a 15-25 record and earned a sixth place spot in the final standings.

Express Vice President Brad Botwin said he has a "very optimistic" outlook on the season. He said he is looking forward to seeing how the players mesh with the coaching staff.

"I am looking forward to a very competitive season," Botwin said. "It's going to be exciting."

The Express kicks off the season on Friday, June 5 when they travel to Alexandria, Virginia to take on the Alexandria Aces at 7 p.m.

Their home opener is scheduled for June 6 at 7 p.m. when the Maryland Redbirds come to town. Rockville Mayor Susan Hoffman will throw the honorary first pitch.