

Wendt makes a pitch for U-D baseball

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Greg Wendt has chucked his basketball shorts for awhile to chuck a few fast balls.

At least that was the original plan. The University of Detroit basketball standout had originally taken his act to the diamond as a pitcher. But judging by his two-hit performance as a designated hitter in the Titans' win over Eastern Michigan recently, his hitting is a welcomed rainstorm in a desert of offensive lethargy.

Wendt, a product of Redford Catholic Central, clubbed a double, walked twice, drove in two runs and scored twice against the Hurons. The 18-16 win broke a three-game losing streak for the Titans, who've been shutout twice already this season.

"HE SURPRISED the heck out of me," said U-D coach Bob Miller, whose team was off to a dreadful 3-10 start. "You don't expect a kid to hit like that after not swinging a bat for two years."

For Wendt, who Miller said will DH, pitch and play first base this season, the adjustment back to the summer game hasn't been difficult.

"It wasn't a hard transition," said Wendt, a senior who concluded his basketball career this year. "I was able to get my timing down after a week or so."

"I was brought up on baseball," he added. "My dad gave me a bat instead of a teeing ring when I was a baby."

The thought of Wendt playing baseball at U-D is something Miller has chewed on for awhile. The Titan coach, in his 22nd year, viewed Wendt in Adray League play and liked what he saw. He repeatedly asked Wendt to play before the Catholic Central grad finally relented.

When the Titans returned from their spring trip to Florida, Wendt was waiting with glove in hand.

"This was my last year in basketball as far as college goes," said Wendt, who hopes to play in the NBA or in Europe. "This is a chance to have some fun in my last year here."

HIS ENTHUSIASM appeared to rub off on the U-D hitters. The Titans have been in a drought at the plate this season. Wendt thinks his hitting performance in the suggest at EMU helped loosen a few tight hands.

baseball

"I'm a very relaxed type of player," he said. "If they see me hitting the ball, then might relax and start striking the ball also."

For the Titans to make any noise in the Midwestern Collegiate Conference North this season, the bats will have to ring loudly. U-D was 10-32 last season and finished third in the MCC North division.

Miller is counting on shortstop Rick Munson, a Redford Thurston grad, catcher Kevin Lowery and second baseman Tom Dimambro for the offense this season.

OF THE group, Miller is especially counting Munson to be the king pin of the infield. At the plate, he's looking at a 300 season from the senior shortstop.

"He better hit .300, or we're in trouble," said Miller.

Another area player trying to make at least an impression is freshman Kevin Moore, a product of Red-

ford Union. Playing time for Moore may be limited with Lowery hitting .444. Miller said he hopes to have Moore pinch hitting some.

On the other side of the plate on the mound, the Titans are led by the

starting tandem of junior left-hander Joe Taraskavage and sophomore right-hander Gary Peters. John Rogers, a sophomore from Redford CC, has seen limited action as a reliever so far.

The bullpen features newcomer Stewart Hillman, a right-hander whose posted a 1.58 earned run average in four relief appearances.

The pitching corps, though, have taken a beating during the early

going. Miller said his team's record in the Florida sun was deceiving.

"We didn't get a chance to get outside before we went to Florida. . . It was just a matter of us getting acclimated outside," Miller said.

Miller said he expects Notre Dame and Xavier to provide the most opposition in the MCC North. Oral Roberts, ranked No. 5 in the nation, should have the South division under control.

outdoors

NATURE AT KENSINGTON

Kensington MetroPark (near Brighton) Nature Center is buzzing with several programs on its agenda this weekend.

"Pond Awakening," explaining the ecology of a pond with a park naturalist, takes place at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday.

"Flower Folklore," explaining how our ancestors used and relied on plants in the spring, is scheduled for 10 a.m. Sunday.

"Spring in the Woods," a walk to discover what plants and animals are doing this season, is slated for 2 p.m. Sunday.

In the following weeks, other programs are planned:

- "Creatures of the Evening," a two-hour indoor-outdoor program, 7 p.m. on Thursday. Waterproof foot gear should be worn.

- "April's Animals," a program exploring the trails for active spring animals, 1:30 p.m. Saturday, April 16.

- "Amphibian Symphony," a walk to listen for and see frogs, 10 a.m. Sunday, April 20. Boots or waterproof foot gear is recommended.

- "Woodland Wildflowers," a look at the earliest flowers of spring, 2 p.m. Sunday, April 20.

Most of the programs are free but advanced registration is required. Those interested can contact the Huron-Clinton Metroparks toll-free at 1-800-552-0772.

CHANGE IN RESERVATION SYSTEM

Campers can make phone reservations at state parks including Hartwick Pines, Ludington, Mears, Petoskey, South Higgins Lake and Warren Dunes, the Department of Natural Resources said recently.

All state parks are now under a phone reservation system.

"We made this change to improve our service to the public," said Ron Nagel, of the DNR's parks division.

In the Lower Peninsula, only a two-night minimum reservation is required.

Upper Peninsula state parks will again take written and phone reservations with only a one-night minimum. As in the past, only 50 percent of the campsites in a given park are under the reservation system. The other 50 percent are available on a

first-come, first-served basis.

For phone numbers of the state parks you plan to attend, call the state information center at 1-517-373-1220 or the state travel bureau at 1-517-373-1195.

STEELHEAD ON THE RISE

Spring steelhead stream action should be improved in Michigan again this year, reported AAA of Michigan.

The reasons for the improvement, which has occurred in the last three years, are increased plantings and better natural survival rates.

Western Michigan, from the Indiana line to Traverse City, should be the focal point of the improvement. The eastern shore from Flat Rock to Fort Austin in the Thumb area should also see more steelhead activity.

The Department of Natural Resources said steelhead productivity should be the same as last year in other areas of the state.

Peak runs started in mid-March in southeast Michigan, and should run through the middle of April. In Western Michigan, the best time for steelhead movement is early April to early May.



KIDS

KIDS IDENTIFICATION SIGN-UP APRIL 7-13

THUMBS UP FOR SAFETY

Let's do something for the safety of our kids! April 7 to 13 is Child Safety Week at the shopping centers listed below. Parents...bring your children in for free fingerprinting. Prints are yours to keep as a record and hopefully never to be needed. And your children will learn the basic rules of safety. Call the mall nearest you for further information.

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|--|------------------------------|
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769-9610 | TWELVE OAKS MALL
348-9400 |
| CLINTON VALLEY CONSUMER MALL
851-8300 | UNIVERSAL MALL
751-3161 |
| EASTLAND
371-1501 | WESTLAND
425-5001 |
| FAIRLANE TOWN CENTER
593-1370 | WONDERLAND
522-4100 |
| HAMPTON SQUARE
(517) 894-0668 | OAKLAND MALL
585-6000 |
| HUNTER'S SQUARE/TALLY HALL
855-3444 | ROSEVILLE PLAZA
851-8300 |
| LAKESIDE
247-4131 | SOUTHLAND
374-2805 |
| LIVONIA MALL
476-1166 | SUMMIT PLACE
682-0123 |
| MACOMBE MALL
293-7800 | TEL-TWELVE MALL
353-4111 |
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