

THE NEOSHO DAILY NEWS

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Generals move to Ozark for upcoming season

By Cody Thorn / Daily News Sports Editor

OZARK - A new season brings optimism for any baseball fan.

For those who follow the Springfield Generals, a collegiate baseball team, optimism and change are going hand and hand this summer.



Price Cutter Park, pictured above, will serve as the new home for the Ozark Generals baseball team. The team will feature a group of local college players. COURTESY PHOTO

The Generals, coached by Rusty Aton, is moving south from Springfield to Ozark, where they will be the tenants at Price Cutter Park.

Price Cutter Park, the home of the former Ozark Mountain Ducks, was just the first part of a transformation for the Generals.

The team's moniker changed to the Ozark Generals and the independent team has now latched on as a member of the Missouri Iowa Nebraska Kansas League, better known as the MINK League.

Aton noted the team had a meeting with the MINK officials in October and presented information about the team and the desire to join the league.

A few weeks later, Aton noted the team was allowed to join.

"It's a big deal," said Aton. "It's a huge difference when it comes to recruiting players."

The team also has a new website (www.generalsbaseballclub.com) and a new radio provider - Springfield based WebSports Radio, who will broadcast the games on www.websportsradio.com

The Generals most prominent local player will be Neosho's Taylor House.

House, who just finished his second season at Longview Community College, will return as the team's leadoff hitter.

"I'm real excited about playing this year," said House. "I'm excited about seeing a lot of Division 1 caliber pitching. I saw a lot last year, I remember I hit against Nebraska's No. 3 pitcher last year."

The other local connection will be Bill Mulholland, who begins working as an assistant coach for

Aton. Last year, Mulholland, a former Neosho High and Crowder College baseball player, played on the Generals as an outfielder.

Other notable players on the roster include Missouri Southern southpaw Lucas Vestal and Crowder College second baseman Justin Skinner, who is set to play at Drury next year.

Former Carthage pitcher Tyler Lipscomb is also on the roster, as is former Glendale catcher Tino Robbins.

San Francisco University's Spencer Mather, a product of Ozark High School and Missouri State signee Buddy Baumann also are on the roster. Scott Carroll, Missouri State's starting quarterback/starting pitcher, is set to play, unless he is drafted and signed in the upcoming Major League Baseball First-Year Player Draft.

Aton noted other players who could have an impact are David Mann, a 6-6 outfielder from the highly successful Oklahoma City University program and Matt Stoeklen, a first baseman who signed with Ball State.

"We have a lot of good JUCO players and a lot of good college players," said Aton. "Talking to other coaches, you find out this is a fairly well scouted league when it comes to pro baseball."

Aton and the rest of the Generals are looking forward to the move to Price Cutter Park.

The team's former residence - Meador Park - is undergoing renovations this summer to get ready to meet NCAA Division II requirements for Drury to play next spring.

Aton and Brad Eldridge, the former General Manager of the Mountain Ducks, hammered out a deal to get the Generals to play there this summer.

The price for general admission seating is \$5 for adults and \$4 for senior citizens and fans can sit anywhere they want in the stadium. On top of that, there will be no parking fees and Aton noted that concession prices "will be about half of the Springfield Cardinals prices."

Another big draw for being in the MINK League is the top two teams in the league get an automatic bid to the National Baseball Congress World Series held annually in Wichita.

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