

Team  Watching



*Hudson, North Carolina*

By David Himmelstein

Repeating as the state champions is not an easy feat to accomplish. The Spartans of South Caldwell set their sites high, but would be disappointed in 2008.

Coach Jeff Parham knew his team was good enough to repeat and was shocked and dismayed at the collapse that occurred during the fourth round. "We had a meltdown," Parham said. "We just completely broke down in the fifth. But it doesn't take away from what this team accomplished."

He is right. The Spartans were ranked number 1 in North Carolina for the season and besides losing to Providence in the state tournament, had only one loss, which came against region opponent, Watauga. The Spartans dropped that game by a score of 1-0. That game would prove to be a stepping stone as South Caldwell battled back to win 16 straight. Not only did they streak through the season without any more losses, the Spartans went through the conference tournament and won. "That says a lot about this team," reports Parham.

Leading the way was senior pitcher Jimmy Messer. Messer had a record of 10-1 this year with 8 shutouts, and an ERA of .11. Messer also tossed his first no-hitter this year against the Freedom Patriots. He was 15-0 last season leading his team to a state title. For his career at South Caldwell, Messer was 34-2.

Helping out with the bat was catcher, Brad Chavis. He hit .379 with 10 home runs and about 30 runs. According to Parham one of the toughest outs was Lucas Jackson, second base. Jackson hit in the two-hole and drove in as well as scored a lot of runs this season.

When asked about the highlights of the season, Coach Parham stated that the pitching staff did a phenomenal job. Not only did Messer lead the way, there was also Cody Penny who ended with an 8-1 record, and as a junior hit .405. Then there is Cody Poarch, who along with Messer threw a no-hitter against the Hibriten Panthers. Poarch was 6-0 this year.

When looking back at the season and the accomplishments of this team, Parham is panged by disbelief. "It is just so shocking. This was probably the best defensive team I have coached. And to just miss a routine play, and to watch the snowball effect, it's hard to believe," insists Parham.

Parham gave some credit to his wife, who was very supportive of him this year. She commented to him about that final game against Providence. She was quoted as saying, "Did you know that was the first time you lost your lead?" After considering this, Parham knew she was right. The Spartans had games where they battled back to win, but whenever they were out in front, it stayed that way. Again just another achievement of this team.

This is what high school baseball is all about. Nothing is ever set in stone and not always does the best team win. However, Coach Parham is looking forward to the summer season. He believes there will be some good young talent coming back, and maybe even some good kids in the future. No doubt South Caldwell will be back in the state tournament again next year.

**Keep your eye on this team; they are bound to live up to the expectations the coaches set for them. “Our motto is – It starts with the team, there are no individuals. You will have to give yourself up for each other. I believe this idea has really helped,” mentions Parham.**

**Well coach, sometimes you win and sometime you lose, but it seems you will be okay. Good luck next year!**