



Wittenberg Baseball 2002 Season in Review

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SETTING THE SCENE: Big things were expected of the 2002 Wittenberg baseball team, which had eight seniors back in the fold after a 22-12-1 campaign in 2001. After a slow start, the Tigers got hot, sprinting out to a 10-0 record in the North Coast Athletic Conference West Division.

But the Tigers were caught from behind by nationally ranked Ohio Wesleyan, which won the final two games of the season against Wittenberg to earn a split of the NCAC West title. Then in the NCAC Tournament, Wittenberg fell to the No. 1 ranked team in the nation, the College of Wooster.

Wittenberg wound up with a 21-16 overall record against a very difficult schedule, including a 10-2 mark in the NCAC West. The Tigers were a prolific offensive club once again, setting a school record with a .351 team batting average, eclipsing last year's record of .349, and they received some strong pitching performances from its relatively young, inexperienced staff.

The Tigers can take heart in the fact that they were consistently competitive with some of the best teams in the country, falling just short in compiling a hard-luck 1-8 record against OWU, Wooster and eventual national champion Marietta. Among the winning teams that Wittenberg did take the measure of were Denison, Ohio Northern, Muskingum and the University of Dayton, who defeated Ohio State just a week after dropping a 14-10 home decision to the Tigers.

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OFFENSE, OFFENSE, OFFENSE: Once again, the Tigers had plenty of powerful bats in the lineup. They hit a combined .351, a year after breaking the school record for batting average in a season at .349.

Compare that to the .300 average of Wittenberg's opponents in 2002.

The Tigers were 10-0 in games in which they reached double-figures in runs scored, including a season-high 23-run outburst to conclude a clutch three-game NCAC West sweep over Denison on April 23. In that game, the Tigers established season highs in at-bats (50), runs (23), hits (28), runs batted in (23) and doubles (10). The latter was a school and NCAC record.

Leading the charge at the plate was senior shortstop **Bryan Burke (Brunswick, Ohio/Brunswick)**, who finished with a .436 batting average, eight home runs and 39 RBI. He was one of eight lineup regulars to hit above .330 for the season. The others were senior outfielder **Scott Hirsch (Cincinnati, Ohio/Colerain)** at .427, senior outfielder **Lance Dill (Bellville, Ohio/Clear Fork)** at .397, junior first baseman **Ryan Born (Marion, Ohio/Pleasant)** at .386,

junior designated hitter **Trent West (Cincinnati, Ohio/Purcell Marian)** at .381, senior catcher **Nate Williams (Urbana, Ohio/Urbana)** at .362, freshman infielder **Brandon Godzik (Dayton, Ohio/Vandalia Butler)** at .341 and freshman outfielder **Matt Foster (Granville, Ohio/Granville)** at .333.

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ON THE MOUND: The Tigers had a collective earned run average of 6.00, but they did have a number of outstanding performances turned in on the mound.

Working primarily out of the bullpen as the team's closer, junior **Brian Robinson (Columbus, Ohio/Centennial)** was outstanding with a 3.74 ERA in 16 appearances. In 21.2 innings, he allowed 19 hits and nine earned runs in compiling a 1-3 record.

The team had five players make at least six starts on the season, led by freshman **Ryan Goldschmidt's (Ft. Loramie, Ohio/Ft. Loramie)** nine. He finished with a team high of five wins, nine starts, four complete games and 51 innings pitched. The team's other top starters were seniors **Brad Cerovac (Brunswick, Ohio/Brunswick)**, who went 3-1 with a 5.10 ERA in six starts and 42.1 innings pitched, and **Nick Allen (Dayton, Ohio/Vandalia Butler)**, who finished at 3-3 with a 5.77 ERA in 12 appearances, including six starts.

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ALL-NCAC: To the victors go the spoils, and Wittenberg placed seven athletes on the All-NCAC teams. Bryan Burke, Lance Dill, Scott Hirsch and Nate Williams were all selected to the first team, while Trent West was named second team and Nick Allen and Brad Cerovac made honorable mention.

Burke, Dill and Hirsch all made All-Mid-east teams as well. Burke and Hirsch were second-team selections, while Dill was a third-teamer.

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A LOTTA CLASS: **Nate Williams** was selected to the 2002 Verizon Academic All-District IV College Division Baseball First Team. Williams, a three-year starter, graduated in May with a degree in history. He compiled an outstanding 3.459 grade point average.

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THE COACH: **Jay Lewis (Wittenberg '94)** completed his sixth season as the Tigers' head coach. He now has a record of 130-99-3.

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Looking Ahead: The Tiger baseball program has some rebuilding ahead as eight seniors now depart, including six players who were either position starters or pitchers who saw extensive action on the mound. Along with Hirsch, Burke, Williams, Dill, Cerovac and Allen, the

Tigers must replace infielder/catcher **Jeff Buelow (Oakland, Mich./Rochester)**, pitcher **Doug Farris (Harrison, Ohio/Harrison)** and everyday second baseman **Karl Friedhoff (Sunman, Ind./Central)**.

By no means does that mean the cupboard is bare, however. The pitching staff is generally young, with three of the five starters in the rotation with at least two years of eligibility remaining. Ryan Born, Matt Foster, Trent West and Brandon Godzik all proved themselves at the plate in 2002 and should provide a nucleus to work around a year from now.

Wittenberg University 2002 Baseball Results

Record: 21-16 (10-2 NCAC West)

Mar. 10 vs. Carroll&	W, 11-5
Mar. 10 vs. Carroll&	W, 18-0
Mar. 11 vs. Central&	W, 8-5
Mar. 11 vs. Central&	W, 3-2
Mar. 12 vs. Calvin&	W, 12-5
Mar. 12 vs. Calvin&	L, 0-4
Mar. 14 vs. Simpson&	L, 1-14
Mar. 14 vs. Simpson&	L, 1-14
Mar. 15 vs. Westfield State&	W, 15-2
Mar. 15 vs. Westfield State&	L, 3-4
Mar. 19 WILMINGTON	L, 6-12
Mar. 21 @ Ohio Dominican	L, 3-9
Mar. 23 MUSKINGUM	W, 7-3
Mar. 23 MUSKINGUM	W, 8-2
Mar. 24 URBANA	L, 4-6
Mar. 30 WABASH*	W, 10-7
Apr. 2 @ Marietta	L, 3-11
Apr. 4 CEDARVILLE	W, 8-2
Apr. 6 WOOSTER	L, 0-2
Apr. 6 WOOSTER	L, 5-12
Apr. 7 OHIO NORTHERN	W, 14-12
Apr. 11 @ Dayton	W, 14-10
Apr. 15 @ Earlham*	W, 6-4
Apr. 15 @ Earlham*	W, 4-1
Apr. 16 @ Mt. St. Joseph	L, 2-5
Apr. 18 @ Earlham*	W, 12-2
Apr. 20 DENISON*	W, 6-4
Apr. 20 DENISON*	W, 8-1
Apr. 23 DENISON*	W, 23-5
Apr. 24 @ Wabash*	W, 9-4
Apr. 24 @ Wabash*	W, 4-0
Apr. 27 OHIO WESLEYAN* W,	14-5
Apr. 27 OHIO WESLEYAN* L,	7-11
Apr. 28 OHIO WESLEYAN* L,	5-15
Apr. 30 @ Thomas More	L, 1-10
May 4 @ Wooster#	L, 2-9
May 4 @ Wooster#	L, 7-13

HOME GAMES IN CAPS
& Spring Break Trip Games
* NCAC West Division Games
NCAC Tournament Games