Successful Recruiting of Top Local High School Players Fuels Resurgence of Texas A&M-Corpus Christi Baseball Program

Islanders looking to smack down nationally-ranked Texas Longhorns AGAIN

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas- In baseball, the term “home-cooking” is usually just a euphemism for having the home field advantage. But, at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi the phrase is being taken literally these days as coach Scott Malone continues to stockpile his roster with some of the best players from area high schools.

When the Islanders take to the diamond to face the nationally-ranked Texas Longhorns in the “Surf vs. Turf” showdown” at Whataburger Field on Tuesday, April 5, beginning at 6 p.m., 10 players from Corpus Christi area high schools will be wearing the unmistakable “I” logo on their cap. Texas fans are all too familiar with the emblem of their third-coast tormentors who earlier this season handed the Longhorns an 8-7 loss at Disch-Falk Field in Austin.

Local products played major roles in the Islanders’ upset of the Longhorns who opened the 2011 season ranked fifth in the nation. In his first college start, right-hander Justin Meza (Corpus Christi Moody) went 5 1/3 innings, surrendering just two hits and striking out seven batters. At the plate, first baseman Trey Hernandez (Robstown High School) walked twice and singled in three at bats with two runs scored; and right fielder Jacob Perales (Corpus Christi Moody) went 2-for-2 with three walks and an RBI.

It was the second time that Texas A&M-Corpus Christi has beaten the six-time national champion Longhorns who were defending their most recent title when the Islanders blanked them 5-0 to open the 2006 season. But it was far from the only impressive victory the Islanders have posted this season. The Islanders beat the Oregon State Beavers, winners of back-to-back national titles in 2006 and 2007, in the Kleberg Bank College Classic. And, the Islanders have notched wins over Big 12 teams Texas Tech and Iowa.

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The key to the Islanders success is the recruiting of Malone and his staff who raked in the talent with last year’s group that gained honorable mention on Collegiate Baseball Newspaper’s list of top national classes. Recently, Texas A&M-Corpus Christi broke into the Top 50 of the College Baseball RPI (Rating Percentage Index) which ranks teams based on wins, losses and strength of schedule.

“It’s exciting to have our program recognized on a national level,” says Malone. “This group of student-athletes puts us in a position to be special. Our recruiting coordinator, Chris Ramirez, has done an excellent job of assembling a class that will be a difference maker in the Southland Conference.”

All but two members of the latest recruiting class are native Texans including Meza, a right-handed pitcher and outfielder and the 2009 All-South Texas Player of the Year. The pitching staff is even more formidable thanks to the addition of right-hander Sean Hoelscher (Calallen) who played at TCU before following his younger brother, Adam (Calallen), a sophomore left-hander, to the Island University.

Other local players making an impact are:

- Roy Ferdin (Corpus Christi Ray) - A senior right-handed pitcher, Ferdin is the team’s all-time leader in innings pitched and career starts.
- Jeramie Marek (Calallen) - A junior shortstop, Marek set a team record last season when he collected at least one hit in 24 straight games.
- Chris Pena (Corpus Christi Miller) – A senior pitcher and outfielder, transferred from Alvin Junior College where he helped lead the Dolphins to the JuCo World Series. In his first year as an Islander, he led the pitching staff with 29 mound appearances.
- Dan Sciantarelli (Corpus Christi Ray) – A junior transfer from North Central Texas College, Sciantarelli has seen playing time at both second and third base during his first season as an Islander.

Tickets are now available for the “Surf vs. Turf” baseball game. General admission is $10. For more information, call 361.561.HOOK (4665). To purchase tickets, go to https://www.ticketreturn.com/prod2/Buy.asp?EventID=64539.

-A&M-Corpus Christi-