SUNY CORTLAND RECEIVES 11th STRAIGHT NCAA BASEBALL BERTH

Red Dragons Seeded First in Six-Team Regional at Joe Bruno Stadium in Troy;
Cortland Looks to Make Seventh World Series Appearance

The SUNY Cortland baseball team has received a berth into the 42-team NCAA Division III playoffs for the 11th straight season and the 12th time overall. The Red Dragons (31-9) will be the first seed at the six-team, double-elimination regional at Joseph L. Bruno Stadium in Troy, and will face sixth-seeded Messiah College of Pennsylvania (22-13) in opening-round action on Thursday at noon. The teams will be meeting for the first time.

Thursday’s other matchups feature second seed and host Rensselaer (26-13) versus fifth-seeded College of Mount St. Mary (31-6) from Newburgh at 3:30 p.m. and third-seeded Trinity College of Connecticut (23-9) and fourth-seeded Ithaca College (24-10) at 7 p.m. The regional will continued with three games on both Friday and Saturday and either one or two games on Sunday. The winner advances to the eight-team NCAA Division III World Series, which will be held May 23-27 in Grand Chute, Wis. (near Appleton; south of Green Bay).

Cortland has won regional titles in six of the last eight years. The Red Dragons had their string of five straight trips to the World Series snapped last spring after finishing 2-2 at the New York regional in Colonie. Cortland finished tied for fifth nationally each year from 1999-2001 after back-to-back third-place showings in 1997 and 1998. Cortland also played in the 1995 World Series, tying for seventh. The World Series is in Wisconsin for the fourth time.

Five of the six teams participating in the regional at Colonie earned automatic tournament berths by winning conference titles. Cortland is the State University of New York Athletic Conference (SUNYAC) tournament champion, Rensselaer won the Upstate Collegiate Athletic Association (UCAA) tournament title and Trinity captured the New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC) tournament crown. Mount St. Mary won the Knickerbocker Conference playoff title and Messiah is the Commonwealth Conference champion. Ithaca is a “Pool B” independent qualifier since the Empire Eight conference does not qualify for an automatic bid.

Cortland and Rensselaer have faced each other in NCAA play every year since 1993 and have the two longest active NCAA Division III playoff appearance streaks. Rensselaer is making its 12th straight NCAA showing (13th overall) and Cortland its 11th straight appearance (Marietta College of Ohio had its string of 27 straight NCAA bids end this spring). Ithaca is making its seventh straight NCAA showing (27th overall) and Trinity is in its fourth NCAA tournament and first since 2000. Mount St. Mary played in the New York regional in both 1998 and 1999 and defeated Cortland in the first game of the 1999 tournament before the Red Dragons bounced back to win four straight games. Messiah is making its first NCAA showing.

Under fourth-year head coach Joe Brown, Cortland reached the 30-win plateau for the 10th consecutive season in 2003. The Red Dragons captured their seventh straight SUNYAC title and 12th in 13 years.

Offensively, Cortland boasts a .342 team batting average. Junior outfielder Josh Horner (Groton) is hitting .452 and junior third baseman Neal Heaton Jr. (Bellport) is batting .435. Senior first baseman Jeff Fiegler (Gloucester, NJ), the SUNYAC Player of the Year, is hitting .406 with team-highs of seven homers and 48 RBI. Freshman Andy Mead (Baldwinsville/C.W. Baker), the SUNYAC First Year Player of the Year, has a .403 batting average with team-highs of six triples and 10 stolen bases.
Junior Mike Hubbs (Averill Park/Tamarac) leads a deep Red Dragon pitching staff that has a 2.65 overall ERA. The SUNYAC Pitcher of the Year, Hubbs is 6-0 and is among the national leaders in Division III with a 0.65 ERA. He has allowed only 27 hits and 13 walks and has struck out 43 batters in 55 innings. Four other starters boast at least four victories. Sophomore Matt Miller (Harrison) is 5-1 with a 2.88 ERA and 52 strikeouts in 50 innings. Sophomore Mike Burnett (Westfield) is 5-1 with a 3.05 ERA and 40 strikeouts in 38 and one-third innings. Senior Kyle Johnson (Hornell) is also 5-1 and has 33 strikeouts in 37 and two-third innings.

The Red Dragons have been solid defensively, posting a .963 fielding percentage with 34 double plays.

2003 NCAA Division III Baseball Tournament
Regional at Joseph L. Bruno Stadium; Troy, N.Y.; May 15-18

Thursday, May 15
Game 1: Cortland (31-9) vs. Messiah (22-13), Noon
Game 2: Rensselaer (26-13) vs. Mount St. Mary (31-6), 3:30 p.m.
Game 3: Trinity (Conn.) (23-9) vs. Ithaca (24-10), 7 p.m.

Friday, May 16
Game 4: Loser Game 1 vs. Loser Game 2, Noon
Game 5: Winner Game 1 vs. Loser Game 3, 3:30 p.m.
Game 6: Winner Game 2 vs. Winner Game 3, 7 p.m.

Saturday, May 17
Game 7 - Noon; Game 8 - 3:30 p.m.; Game 9 - 7 p.m. (pairings to be determined based on results of first six games)

Sunday, May 18
Game 10 - 3:30 p.m.; Game 11 (if necessary) - 7 p.m. (pairings to be determined based on Saturday’s results)
(Rain date: Monday, May 19)

2003 NCAA Division III Baseball Championship -- Regionals (* Host School)

Orange, Calif.
1. *Chapman (30-10)
2. George Fox (29-10)
3. Pomona-Pitzer (29-9)
4. St. Norbert (17-16)

Oshkosh, Wis.
1. Wisconsin-Whitewater (33-7)
2. *Wisconsin-Oshkosh (33-6)
3. Ripon (32-4)
4. St. Olaf (26-12)

Delaware, Ohio
1. *Ohio Wesleyan (29-15)
2. Anderson (Ind.) (29-13)
3. Benedictine (Ill.) (26-15-2)
4. Hope (20-15)

Boyerstown, Pa.
1. Rowan (29-8)
2. Johns Hopkins (32-5)
3. *DeSales (26-11)
4. Lakeland (26-14)
5. Alvernia (27-9)
6. Otterbein (22-22)

Clinton, Miss.
1. Carthage (33-6)
2. *Mississippi College (32-13)
3. Wartburg (32-10-1)
4. Emory (32-13)
5. Fontbonne (25-9)
6. Millsaps (27-15)

Hickory, N.C.
(hosted by Guilford College)
1. Virginia Wesleyan (32-7)
2. Christopher Newport (27-7)
3. Thomas More (31-8)
4. Averett (26-12)
5. Salisbury (31-11-1)
6. Mary Washington (29-8)

Willimantic, Conn.
1. *Eastern Connecticut St. (37-7)
2. Wheaton (Mass.) (25-8-2)
3. Brandeis (22-11-1)
4. Bridgewater State (24-10)
5. Albertus Magnus (21-9)
6. Endicott (21-13)

Troy, N.Y.
See teams above