

# Colby returns 11

By **Joey Falkoff**  
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Colby Community College head baseball coach Ryan Carter believed 2007 was the year his team was finally going to break through in the post-season. The baseball gods determined otherwise. Despite having the homefield advantage and 1-0 lead in their first round playoff best-of-three series with #6 seed Fort Scott, the #3 seeded Trojans lost the final two games and were sent packing much earlier in May than they expected.

“Last year was disappointing,” said Carter. “I thought we had as much talent on that team as we’ve ever had here. I felt we were upset by Fort Scott in that series. They may think otherwise, but I felt we had the firepower to make a run at the end of the season. We weren’t playing our best baseball.”

Fast forward to this spring, and if the Trojans want to make a run at the junior college World Series they will have to go from a team that underachieved to one that exceeds expectations.

Colby returns only 11 of 35 players from last year, including just one everyday position player (Steve Blankenship) and two pitchers that saw any extended time on the mound.

The Trojans are projected to finish fourth in the Western Division, but as they found out last year, playoff success isn’t determined on paper.

While they may be short on experience, Carter said this group can go a long way at redeeming their post-season failure of last season.

“We’re picked fourth, but I think we’re a legit top two team,” said Carter, who is entering his 10th year as the Trojan manager. “We’re going through some growing pains, but this team is very athletic and very dedicated. Their best baseball is still to come. This team may have had a little slower start, but I think we can put up better numbers than last year.”

The team appears to be on its way to baring those sentiments out.

Colby came out of the blocks 2-6 after struggling at tournaments in Louisiana and Texas.

Since then, they’ve won eight of 10 games including two from Lamar, Colo., this past weekend to improve to 10-8. They are also 6-2 in conference play, which puts them in second place—a game behind Barton County for first.

“Schools in this area are always slow-starters because of the weather,” said Carter. “As it gets warmer, you get better because it’s easier to get your timing down. Second place is pretty good considering we haven’t played that well.”

The Trojans allowed only two runs in their doubleheader sweep of Lamar, but thus far Carter says the team’s biggest strength has been their offense.

“We’re having really good at-bats right now, and I like where

we’re at,” said Carter.

Leading the way for the Trojans at the plate have been freshman Scott Hornstra and sophomore all-conference performer Aaron Dunsmore. Both players entered last weekend’s action with a .393 batting average.

Hornstra also leads the team in home runs with four and RBIs with 17.

The 6-1 freshman has been one of the Trojans best pitchers as well. He’s 2-0 with a 2.21 ERA, including a 10 strikeout performance earlier this year in a win over Seward County.

“Scott has a chance to be a dominating two-way player for us,” said Carter.

Also off to a strong start offensively have been Steve Kletke (.386), Brennen Peterson (.357) and Eric Sim (.326).

The defense and pitching showed signs this weekend of coming around, but early on it has been a struggle.

Through the team’s first 16 games, the Trojan staff has an ERA of 5.03. In the field, they’ve committed 36 errors while their opponents have only 18.

“Our offense is going to be able to keep us in games, but for us to go deep in the post-season we need to play better defense and pitch better,” said Carter. “Our pitching and defense has been shaky so far. There’s the old expression, ‘offense wins games, and pitching and defense win championships. We want to win championships, and our pitching and defense are both capable of improving.”

Hornstra’s 2.21 ERA is the best on the team right now.

Also off to solid starts have been Max Greve (2-2, 4.47) and Sean Lydon (1-2, 3.86).

With Blankenship, their lone returning starter hurt, the Trojans are still looking for someone to assert themselves as the leader.

“We’re pitching staff without an ace,” said Carter. “We’re learning as we go. It’s a matter of experience. Practice and games are completely different and we’ve taken our growing pains on the mound.”

Carter said Mark Phillips, Jason Baylor and Zach Hays all have a chance to dominant arms before the year is out.

The Trojans will stick with a four-man rotation on the week-ends, and a rotation for their mid-week games.

Despite the struggles on the mound, Colby has managed to sneak into second place, but with #16 ranked Butler County and #25 ranked Seward County lurking behind, things are far from settled. “Like every year our goal is to play to the best of our ability, continue to get better as the year goes on and have a legitimate shot to make the World Series,” said Carter. “I know we’re going to be playing our best baseball at the end. The question is will that be good enough.”

It wasn’t last season, but this new-look Trojan team is hoping to re-write that script.



Colby High senior Tasha Wagoner, right, works her way around the Augusta defenders during the 2007 state high school basketball tournament. Wagoner is one of several players from Thomas County schools in the 15th annual Sports Shoppe/Colby Bowl All-Star game. The games begin 5 p.m. Saturday at Colby Community Building.

FREE PRESS FILE PHOTO

## High school seniors play Saturday

Rosters for the 15th Annual Sports Shoppe/Colby Bowl All-Star Classic have been announced by Colby Community College.

The All-Star games featuring senior basketball players will be held Saturday at the Colby Community Building.

The women’s game is set to tip-off at 5 p.m. with the men’s game to follow at 7 p.m.

For more information contact Tom Stephens at (785) 460-5452.

The following is a list of players who will be participating in the event:

Thomas County players are highlighted in bold.

Girls: Emily Carney (Sylvan Grove), Demi French (Osborne), Michaela Gasper (Lakeside), Corinna Hoyt (Hoxie), **Abbie Allen (Brewster)**, Danielle Pfeifer (Ellis), **Paige Stephens (Colby)**, Brea Teeter (Oakley), Trisha Tholen (Wheatland), **Tasha Wagoner (Colby)**, Rachelle Belisle (Palco), Tracy Mans (Osborne), **Lissa Mazanec (Colby)**, Aubrey Frederking (Plainville), Erica Palmer (Lucas Luray), **Aubrette Stephens (Colby)**, Kylie Stoppel (Wilson), Jenna Vonada (Sylvan Grove), Megan Weaver (Wheatland), and Kimber Weiser (Oakley).

Boys: Eric Young (Weskan),

Drew Frazier (Weskan), Ethan Kuhlman (Kensington), Wade Wolf (Wheatland), **Dan Rogers (Golden Plains)**, Seth Bixenman (Wheatland), Daniel Gottschalk (Ellis), Brandon Wittman (Quinter), **Michael Collett (Brewster)**, Jace Young (Greeley County), **Ethan Stover (Colby)**, Logan Kats (Norton), Jason Crawford (Natoma), Jeff Henick (Sharon Springs), Taylor Elder (Sharon Springs), Bradan Wilson (Smith Center), Jared Mocaby (Smith Center), David Gerstner (Hill City), Ted Crabtree (St. Francis), and Cameron Locke (Trego County).

## Bulldogs make all-league teams

Brewster and Golden Plains found themselves well-represented on this year’s Western Kansas All-Liberty League basketball teams

Brewster had three boys and three girls receive all league honors. Golden Plains had two boys and one girl make the team.

The Brewster Bulldog boys basketball team, which finished the year 11-10, was represented by senior Michael Collett. Seniors Corey Siruta and Jance McKee received honorable mention recognition. The Brewster girls reached the Substate finals before losing to Wheatland-Grinnell 48-46. Seniors Abbie Allen and Melissa Baird, along with sophomore Nichelle Erskine, earned spots on the all-league girls team.

Golden Plains saw their season end at 11-13 after losing in the Substate semifinals to Kensington. Junior Tate Bruggeman and senior Dan Rogers were honored for their seasons. For the Golden Plains girls, senior Brittany Ritter made the squad.

Boys  
Michael Collett, Sr., Brewster;

Lincoln Pochop, Sr., Cheylin; Tate Bruggeman, Jr., Golden Plains; Dan Rogers, Sr., Golden Plains; Chip Schneider, Jr., Greeley County; Kaman Schneider, Sr., Greeley County; Taylor Barrett, Sr., Triplains; Tate Andrews, So., Wallace County; Taylor Elder, Sr., Wallace County; Jeff Hennick, Sr., Wallace County; Drew Frasier, Sr., Weskan; Jesse Welsh, Sr., Weskan; Chase Waldman, Jr., Wheatland/Grinnell; Wade Wolf, Sr., Wheatland/Grinnell

Girls  
Abbie Allen, Sr., Brewster; Melissa Baird, Sr., Brewster; Nichelle Erskine So., Brewster; Tia Sager, Jr., Cheylin; Brittany Ritter, Sr., Golden Plains; Kelly Crittendon So., Greeley County; Megan Shafer, Jr. Greeley County; Kara Gfeller. So., Triplains; Kenzi Knobbe, So. Wallace County; Danica Cox, Jr., Weskan; Payton Walker

So. Weskan; Cassandra Welsh Jr. Weskan; Trish Tholen Sr. Wheatland/Grinnell; Meagan Weaver Sr. Wheatland/Grinnell; Tessa Weaver Jr. Wheatland/Grinnell

## Trojans go 1-3

Colby Community College softball team won one of four games over the weekend during its own tournament.

Colby lost its first game 6-5 in eight innings to McCook, Neb.

Ninostka Amaro led Colby with the bat going 2-3 with two RBIs, a double and a home run. Colby had 11 hits.

Amaro took the loss for Colby giving up one hit, one run and striking out three in one and two-third innings. She replaced started Brittani Kage who gave up five hits, five runs (two earned) in six innings.

Lamar, Colo., defeated Colby 4-3.

Amaro again led Colby at the plate with 2-3, two runs, three RBIs and a two home runs. Colby had six hits. She also took the loss as pitcher giving up five hits, four runs (two earned) in six innings.

Colby’s lone win was a 4-3 eight-inning game over North Platte, Neb. Erin Myers’ pinch hit single and RBI won the game for Colby. Jill Schmidt’s pinch hit and RBI tied the game.

Winning pitcher was Kari Panno. She gave up eight hits, one walk and five strikeouts in the eight innings.

Otero shut out Colby 3-0.

Panno gave up four hits, three runs and struck out eight in seven innings. Colby had just three hits.

“We have started hitting the ball more consistent. Our defense still needs to make every average play so we don’t put so much pressure on our hitters,” said Colby coach Ryan Sturdy.

The Sunday game against Otero was in the snow and cold temperatures.

“I was proud of the way the team fought and didn’t give up in any of the games. We just need to get the attitude as a team to finish teams and not sit on a lead,” he said.

Colby is waiting to see what Tuesday will bring for games against Garden City Tuesday and Wednesday at Carl Adams Softball Field.

Colby is 8-11 on the season and 0-4 in the conference and region.

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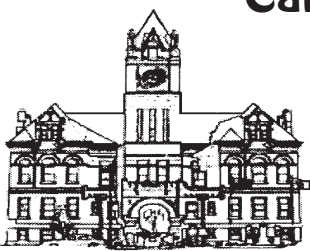
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