

2007 Baseball/Softball Preview

South Choctaw

BASEBALL

Last Year
Did not make the playoffs

Graduated
Stephen Turner and Quinton Roberts

Outlook

Thanks to a bounty of quality pitchers and a years worth of experience, these Rebels will certainly return to respectability after a miserable 2006 season.

PREVIEW

Last baseball season was the pits at South Choctaw. The team didn't even win a game, which, according to coach Charlie Taylor, was an all-time low for the proud program.

"Just a few years ago, anything short of the final four was a failure," Taylor claimed, noting that his Rebels had won three state titles, the first in 1991 when Taylor himself was a senior second baseman and then again in 1995 and 2003 with Taylor at the helm. "Now we are trying to get back to that point."

In all, according to Taylor, South Choctaw has made the final four at least twenty times in the school's history. However, after missing the playoffs

in 2004, just a season after winning state, the rapid decline started.

The Rebels then hit rock-bottom in 2006 with an unprecedented 0-17 season. In all, the Rebels had lost 21 straight games heading into this baseball season.

Although things couldn't get much worse, these Rebels are actually a lot better than you might think, especially considering last year's troubles.

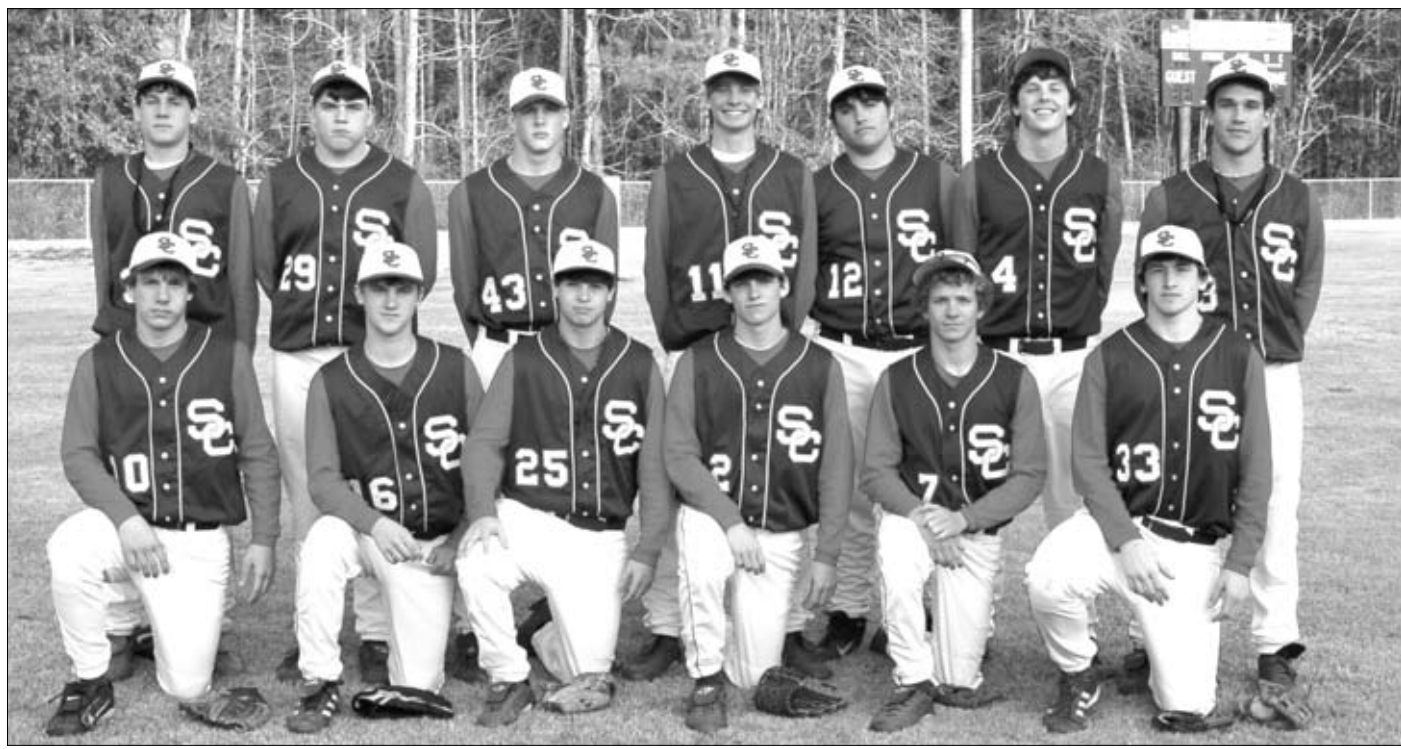
Things have improved so much that the long losing streak has already been put to bed with a convincing 16-4 win over Class A-foe Sumter Academy. And with the way these Rebels have been pitching and spraying the ball around the field at the plate, no need to think that's the last of the 'W's'.

The main factor in this Rebel resurgence is probably the pitching staff that boast eight quality arms.

"I feel pretty confident with out pitching," smiled Taylor when asked about his wealth of arms that includes three lefties. "Last year I had two pitchers. This year I have about eight guys I can give the ball to in tight situations."

That luxury is due to a strong starting staff with junior Trent Gibson and sophomores Tyler Sullivan and Wade Chadwick.

Trent Gibson is a control pitcher that has a knack for winning. After picking up two wins last season for a Southern Choctaw team that hadn't



won a game in over four years, Gibson transferred back to South Choctaw where he picked up the win that broke the Rebels own losing streak.

Jacob Sullivan is an exciting player, either on the mound or behind the plate. When he's pitching, he possesses the team's best fastball, with a wicked curve that can get batters out. When behind the plate, he turns into an excellent catcher with a super-strong arm. At the plate, Sullivan bats clean-up thanks to his solid contact and ability to hit for power.

Lefty **Wade Chadwick** rounds out the starting rotation. Chadwick has a strong left arm that fuels his high-powered fastball. He also has a pretty good change-up that makes his fastball look even better.

Seniors **Matt Etheridge** and **Derek Conner** will team with juniors **Johnathan Guy** and **Tyler Fulcher**, along with sophomore **Chase Nordan** to round out the Rebels' pitching staff. Any of these players can, and will, start or pitch in relief.

At first base for South Choctaw is junior **Tyler Fulcher**, who's sure glove and left-handed bat has

done wonders for the Rebels.

Sophomore **Matt Phillips** is at second base with classmate **Cody McIlwain** at shortstop. This duo has improved immensely this season by cutting down on costly errors and making the routine play.

Third base, when not pitching, will be Trent Gibson, while **Matt Etheridge** will man the corner when Gibson does take the mound.

In the outfield, the speedy **Wade Chadwick** patrols center, while fellow burner, senior **Trey Waddell** mans left. In right field is football star **Derek Conner**. Conner is a fairly good fielder, but he is really in the line-up for his powerful bat.

Sophomore **Billy Jack Boyte** will see plenty of playing time, mostly in the outfield, while classmate **Chase Nordan** could also see some time in the outfield

or at first base.

Although the Rebels have improved greatly, Coach Taylor still warns that defense and hitting is the key to the turnaround.

"Our defense is still an area of concern for us," Taylor finished. "Last year we had numerous games with double-digit errors. If we are going to turn it around, we have to limit those errors considerably and hit the baseball consistently."

Colin's Three to Watch

Jacob Sullivan
Still just a sophomore, this muscle-bound power-hitter can really punish the ball. Oh yeah, he's a great catcher too.

Trent Gibson
Crafty pitcher relies on tenacity and control to get batters out. A solid third baseman with a pretty good stick.

Matt Phillips
Another sophomore who is just starting to shine at the varsity level. Phillips is the Rebels most consistent fielder at his second base spot and his compact swing makes him a great contact hitter, perfect for second in the batting order.

South Choctaw Baseball/Softball
2007 Schedule

Feb. 26	Marengo	away	3:30
Mar. 2-3	Patrician Invitational	away	TBA
Mar. 6	Jackson	home	4 p.m.
Mar. 8	Patrician	away	3
Mar. 12	Faith	home	3:30
Mar. 13	Monroe	away	3:30
Mar. 20	Jackson	away	4
Mar. 22	Marengo	home	4
Mar. 23/24	Hilltop Classic	Linden	TBA
Apr. 2	West Alabama	home	5
Apr. 5	Sumter	away	5
Apr. 6	Wayne	away	11
Apr. 9	Clarke Prep	home	4
Apr. 10	Central	home	5
Apr. 13	West Alabama	away	5
Apr. 16	Faith	away	4
Apr. 17	Sumter	home	5
Apr. 19	Patrician	home	4
Apr. 20	Central	away	4
Apr. 23	Warrior	home	4
Apr. 24	Open Door	away	4
Apr. 28	First round playoffs/baseball		
May 4	Baseball state		

2007 Baseball/Softball Preview

South Choctaw

SOFTBALL

Last Season
Did not make the playoffs

Graduated
Nicole Jenkins

Outlook

These Rebels have already matched last season's win total, and with a wide-opened 1A, a return to the playoffs and maybe even Montgomery is suddenly possible

PREVIEW

In 2004 and 2005, the Rebels were *oh-so* close to winning the whole thing. They finished runner-up twice because, according to coach Diane Johnson, they couldn't hit the ball.

But now, with a renewed emphasis at the plate, these Rebels are

ready to swing their way back to Montgomery.

"We are really working on hitting the ball this year," Johnson said. "If we can hit, we should be able to win games. In the past few years we have not hit the ball at all. We were runner-up at state for two years in a row because we couldn't hit the ball. That's not the problem any more."

That's not just rhetoric either, South Choctaw is so serious about hitting the ball that they called in an outside hitting and pitching instructor.

Cullumberg's Franklin Baxter has been working with the Rebels during practices. Baxter is the father and tutor of the legendary Kirby Baxter, who anchored Patrician Academy's softball team before going on to pitch at the University of Mobile.

Baxter's teachings have already translated onto the playing field, where the Rebels are knocking the ball around to the tune of a 3-4 start. They won just four games last season.

"The girls have been excited about batting this year," Johnson stated, noting that her Class 1A Rebels even out hit Class 2A Jackson 10-2, despite losing. "If we continue to hit the ball like this, I anticipate a very very good year."

Leading the Rebels' resurgence at the plate has been shortstop **Arielle Campbell**. The senior has hit the ball with authority early on and is already sporting a



Not pictured:
Trystan Mosley and
Maranda Hallman

batting average of .500 (11-for-22). She finished the PA Invitational with eight total hits, including a home run and a triple. Campbell bats third in the order and should collect plenty of RBI with her ability to hit for average and power.

Another hot-hitter has been first baseman **Kate Dahlberg**. Dahlberg, a senior, is batting .350 (7-for-20) with two triples. Dahlberg bats second in the order, where her blazing speed helps set the table for Campbell.

In the lead-off spot for the Rebels will be center fielder **Tanner Johnson**, who is a good contact hitter that can really fly around the bases.

Batting in the middle of the order will be power-hitting senior outfielder **Jessie Chadwick** and third baseman **Ila Stokley**. Both have turned into tough outs at the plate, with Chadwick showing homerun power and Stokley possessing a more compact swing better for producing base hits.

At second base will be junior **Cierra Giles**. Senior **Shayna Butler** will be in left field, and

freshman **Maranda Hallman** will play behind the plate.

Hallman, who has been batting at the bottom of the Rebel order, has already hit an over-the-fence homerun in the Rebels 5-1 win over Kingwood.

Another youngster, eighth grader **Payton Hanna**, will also see spot duty in the outfield, at second base or either pinch-hitting or running. Even with the new-and-improved offense, you still need good pitching to win fast-pitch softball games, and the Rebels have two gems.

Senior **Trystan Mosley** is the ace of the staff. The right-hander is the hardest throwing Rebel and possess wonderful control of her pitches. Mosley, who picked up a win over 3A Cottage Hill at the PA Invitational last weekend, looked great in her last outing, throwing a seven inning one-hitter with five strike outs in the Rebels 2-1 loss to Jackson.

Cierra Giles is the team's No. 2 starter and is more of a fastball, change-up pitcher. Giles, however, does not possess

a lot of experience at he varisty level after pitching effectively, but sparingly, last season.

By the playoffs when Giles is more seasoned, the Rebels should be blessed with two legitimate No.1 starters. Something most teams, especially in Class 1A, don't possess.

In fact, thanks to a limited amount of teams in Class 1A West, the Rebels are already in the first-round of the AISA playoffs. Couple that with a new approach at the plate and couple of quality starting pitchers, and these Rebels are on the road back to Montgomery.

Colin's Three to Watch

Trystan Mosley
Rebels' ace will get bulk of starts, especially against bigger schools. Mosley throws hard with great control. She doesn't throw a lot of change-ups, but she has a good feel for how to work the plate to get batters out.

Arielle Campbell
A sweet-swinging shortstop who has absolutely been on fire at the plate to start the season. Campbell, who is batting .500 (11-for-22), will be responsible for driving in the Rebels' speedy lead-off hitters from her spot in the middle of the order.

Kate Dahlberg
Hoops superstar shines on the diamond thanks to good bat, excellent speed and great glove at first base. If Dahlberg is getting on base at the top of the Rebels' lineup, watch out!

(I'm cheating again, but watch for two Rebel youngsters, eighth grader Payton Hanna and freshman Maranda Hallman. Hanna is a utility player with potential for greatness, while Hallman is the Rebels starting catcher and has already smacked one over the fence. *The future looks bright!*)

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