



WASHINGTON STATE

2008 Season Outlook



2008 OUTLOOK

In 2008, Washington State will attempt to post a third-straight winning season, something the Cougars have not done since 1994 when a 35-26 mark capped a run of 37 consecutive campaigns above .500.

This season, Washington State has momentum having won its final three Pacific-10 Conference series in 2007. During the stretch, the Cougars took two out of three at home from Stanford, on the road against national champion Oregon State, and in Pullman over NCAA super regional participant UCLA.

Donnie Marbut enters his fourth season as the helm of the program after guiding the Cougars to 85 wins, the most by a WSU mentor in his first three seasons on the Palouse.

CATCHERS

Junior Greg Lagreid has started 81 games in his Washington State career and has thrown out 31.7 percent of runners attempting to steal.

"Greg Lagreid has been really great defensively behind the plate for two years and he made strides with the bat last season," Marbut said. "He had as good a summer as anyone in the country and brought that back with him in the fall."

A native of Edmonds, Wash., Lagreid led the Nevada (Mo.) Griffins to the National Baseball Congress (NBC) World Series with a .402 batting average, 11 home runs and 66 runs batted in. He hit .500 (9-for-18) with four doubles, two home runs, 11 RBI, and two stolen bases during the NBC World Series and was named an All-American for the event. He was an all-star selection in the Jayhawk League, captured the circuit's most valuable player award, and was named the No. 2 prospect in the league by Baseball America.

"What has hurt Lagreid in the past was there hasn't been as much competition for his position," Marbut said. "With the emergence and transferring (from Clemson) of (junior) Alex Burg, we have changed that."

"Alex is a fine player who we recruited out of high school, but he decided to take his talents elsewhere. Now, he is back in his home state and had a nice fall, especially offensively. We fell really good with a 1-2 punch behind the plate with Lagreid and Burg."



Greg Lagreid

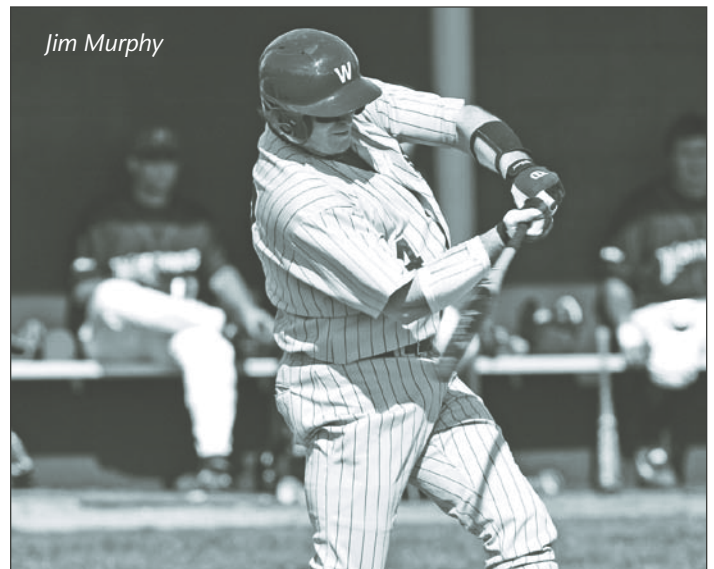
Freshman Brodie McCormack from Brewster, Wash. will be expected to provide depth behind the plate.

"Brodie McCormack was a high recruit and an athletic player who won a lot of games in high school at Brewster," Marbut said. "He is accustomed to winning during his prep and summer ball. He is a good athlete having played basketball as well."

Redshirt-freshman Jay Ponciano from Vancouver, Wash., and freshman Joe Huwer, a transfer from Nebraska, round out the catching corp.

"We have two wildcards in Jay Ponciano and Joe Huwer," Marbut said. "Jay one was one of our biggest recruits two years ago and he just hasn't been able to get healthy. We are not going to know his status until mid-February. We recruited Joe out of high school, but he went to Nebraska. He brings a left-handed bat with power."

INFIELDERS



Jim Murphy

Kirkland, Wash., native Jim Murphy returns for his senior year having anchored first base each of the past three seasons. Murphy has started 150 games and owns a .284 career batting average while posting a .993 career fielding percentage.

"Murphy will start for the fourth-straight year and has more career putouts than anybody in school history," Marbut said. "I think he will bounce back offensively and have a great senior year. Defensively, he has been phenomenal for three years. He knows his job is to drive in runs and I believe he will do that this year. He has done a great job becoming bigger, faster, stronger, and more agile. I am looking for a big senior year out of Jimmy."

Murphy's understudy at first base will be freshman Ryan Peterson from Renton, Wash.

"We think Ryan Peterson is the left-handed bat of the future," Marbut said. "It is always nice to have a freshman like him behind an experienced guy like Jim."



Junior Travis Coulter from Kennewick, Wash., returns to second base, where he started as a freshman in 2006, after a shoulder injury limited him to designated hitter and pinch-hitting duties in 2007. He is a .330 career hitter and collected 18 extra-base hits in 45 games last season.

"A lot of people didn't talk about the fact our biggest blow last year was Travis Coulter not being able to play defense for us last season," Marbut said. "In my opinion, he might be the best second baseman in the Pac-10. He is a special player and we are very excited to have him back and healthy."

Senior Paul Gran from Bothell, Wash., will start at third base or shortstop. An All-America candidate, Gran has started all 106 games he has appeared in as a Cougar. He is a .306 career hitter and has been successful on 83 percent of his stolen base attempts.

"For a 15 to 20 game stretch last year, Gran was one of the best players in the Pac-10," Marbut said. "He turned down some dollars from the professional ranks to come back for his senior year and we are really fortunate to have him."



At shortstop, freshman Shea Vucinich is the leading candidate to start the season opener.

"Shea was one of the top players in Idaho last year," Marbut said. "When you think of him, you think winner. He is very competitive. He did a good job of catching the ball in the fall and his bat is coming along."

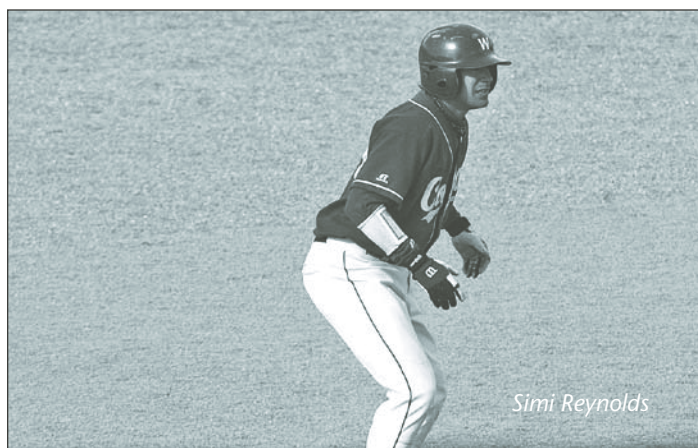
Michael Weber, a sophomore from Seattle who appeared in seven games last season, will provide depth in the middle infield.

"Michael Weber had a nice fall," Marbut said. "He is probably the most improved infielder in the fall. He played a lot of second base with Coulter still recovering from injury and spent some time at third base."

Freshman Matt Argyropoulos from Longview, Wash., is a two-way player who can pitch and play third base.

"We signed Matt as a pitcher, but he has a knack for catching the baseball the way we like it," Marbut said. "He swung the bat well in the fall and he is a good athlete and you will see him somewhere on the field."

OUTFIELDERS



A pair of in-state seniors in Simi Reynolds (Renton) and Scott Suttmeier (Issaquah) will start in left field and right field, respectively.

Reynolds made 26 starts in 2007 and led the team with a .347 batting average. Suttmeier batted .336 in 36 starts last season and is tops among returnees with a .433 on-base percentage.

"When you talk about our outfield, you have to start with the bookends, Simi Reynolds and Scott Suttmeier," Marbut said. "They are both seniors who epitomize what we want our program to be about. They get it done in the classroom and are great in the community. We expect them to build on the fine years they had last season."



In center field, freshmen Garry Kuykendall from Bonney Lake, Wash., and John Desmarais from Renton, Wash., will compete for the starting spot.

"Garry probably had a better fall, but both are left-handed hitters who can run and use the short game," Marbut said. "John is a little more of a speed guy and both will be successful in our program. We are looking forward to watching them progress and see if one of them can be our everyday centerfielder."

Another freshman outfielder, Cam Christian from Auburn, Wash., will provide depth for the Cougars.

"Of all the freshmen outfielders coming in, Cam has one of the nicer swings," Marbut said. "He battled the injury bug during the fall, but we think if we keep him healthy, he can make his presence felt."



UTILITY

The Cougars expect a bounce-back year from Jared Prince, a junior from Poulsbo, Wash. As a freshman in 2006, Prince was a All-Pacific-10 Conference First Team selection, a Freshman All-American honoree by *Baseball America* and *Collegiate Baseball*, and was named a Third Team All-American by the American Baseball Coaches Association after batting .401 in 207 at bats and notching six wins in 15 appearances on the mound.

Last year, a shoulder injury limited him to five and a third innings on the hill and affected his offensive numbers as his batting average dropped to .277 and his home runs were reduced from nine as a freshman to two.

"Our plan is to get Jared healthy," Marbut said. "He has proven in his two years here he can play corner outfield, but we want him back on the mound too. If he can play the outfield and that doesn't hurt his progress we will play him out there. For now, he is our designated hitter."

A quartet of players, sophomore Matt Fanelli (Olympia, Wash.) and freshmen Matt Hart (Federal Way, Wash.), J.R. Roland (Maple Valley, Wash.) and Riley Tubbs (Renton, Wash.) provide the Cougars versatility.

"Matt Fanelli had a nice freshman year before getting hurt toward the end," Marbut said. "He had a great summer and then missed most of the fall with health issues. He has really had the injury bug since he has been here. He is bigger and stronger and can play first base and the outfield. The more opportunity he gets, the more successful he is going to be."

"Matt Hart is a really good athlete. We haven't settled on a position for him. He has been playing some third base and some left field for us. He definitely has bat potential. He is really strong and we just have to find him a spot defensively where he can be comfortable."

"J.R. Roland progressed as the fall went along. He is big, strong and fast and that is the type of player we are trying to recruit. He has the ability to play first base and corner outfield. Down the road, I can see him turning into an offensive threat."

"Riley is another really good athlete. He proved that by being named the *Seattle Times* Athlete of the Year in 2007. He played second base, third base and all three outfield spots in the fall. With any of our young guys, the bat is going to get them on the field and he has been working hard in that area."



Jared Prince

STARTING PITCHING

Chad Arnold, a redshirt-freshman from Kennewick, Wash., sophomore Connor Lambert, a native of Olympia, Wash., and senior Jayson Miller from Richland, Wash., are the favorites for the starting rotation in weekend games.

Lambert made 13 appearances last season and struck out 34 batters in 44 and a third innings.

Miller has appeared in 59 games, including 21 starts, during his career. In 2007 he posted 48 strikeouts and issued 17 walks, nearly a 3-to-1 ratio.



Jayson Miller

"The three guys that pitched the best in the fall were Chad Arnold, Connor Lambert and Jayson Miller," Marbut said. "All three are different types of guys. Chad is the biggest recruit that has shown up on campus for us. We missed him last year when he had Tommy John surgery. His mechanics are cleaner than before the surgery. He has the ability to line up Friday night against the other team's number one guy."

"Connor had a lot of experience last year. He has done everything we have asked him to do and has improved every single day. Guys seem to play better behind him because they know the effort he is putting in on the mound. He will win some games for us."

"Sunday, we want to continue to send Jayson Miller out there. He has kept us in or won a lot of games for us over the past three seasons. We know we will get out of him every time he comes out. He has great focus and has been part of this program for four years."

Jeremy Johnson from Centralia, Wash., and Matt Way from Sitka, Alaska are returning juniors who are the frontrunners to start mid-week games. Johnson has made 24 appearances during his career with only two coming as a starter. Way started seven games last season.

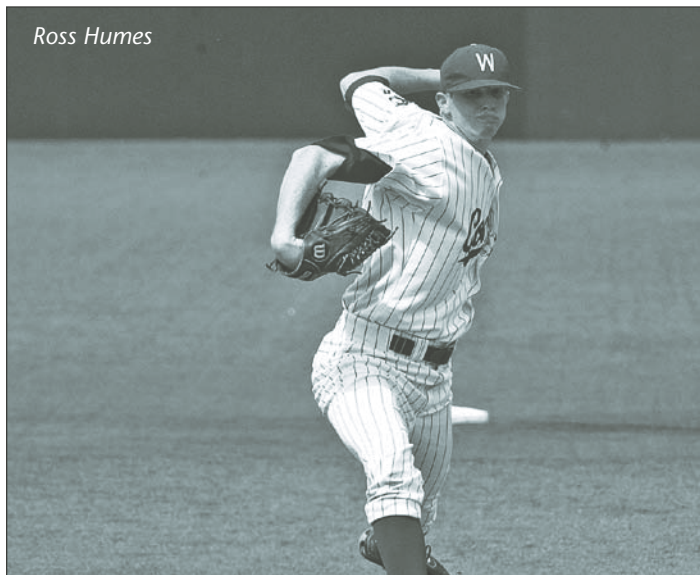
"Matt has starting experience and is one of our best arms," Marbut said. "Jeremy might be our best arm and he pitched very well in the fall. We would like to use them both out of the bullpen because they provide us a security blanket late in the game. They both possess everything they need to be starters so we aren't sure what we are going to do yet."

RELIEF PITCHING

Two veterans, junior Ross Humes from Federal Way, Wash., and senior Steve Kost from Bellevue, Wash., anchor the back end of the Cougar bullpen. Humes tied for second in the Pac-10 with a school-record 12 saves last season. Kost has 65 appearances during his three seasons on the Palouse, 10 shy of the WSU record.

"We feel really good about Ross on the mound late in the game," Marbut said. "I think we only saw glimpses of what he can be based on what he showed last year."

"To get the ball to Ross, we have used Steve Kost in the past and we want to continue to do that. I don't think you can compare experience with anything else and Steve has a lot of that as well as confidence."



There are several candidates for short relief, including right-handers Seth Harvey, a sophomore from Olympia, Wash., and Seattle native Andrew Davis, a senior transfer from Illinois-Chicago.

"Seth gained a lot of valuable experience last year in the Pac-10," Marbut said. "He is one of our hardest throwers."

"Andrew Davis logged a lot of Division I innings last season and has good slider."

The remainder of the Cougar bullpen is a question mark because of injuries, inexperience or both.

Two freshmen, Eric Maupin from Reno, Nev., and James Wise from Boise, Idaho could make an impact immediately.

"Maupin and Wise are both right-handed power guys," Marbut said. "Wise can be in the rotation very early in his career. He just has to learn the college game. Maupin was a Nevada High School State Player of the Year and we are excited about his athletic ability."

Sophomore Michael Ratigan from Ephrata, Wash., made 17 appearances last season, including 15 in relief.

"Michael had a lot of experience last year, but had a dead arm in the fall so we shut him down," Marbut said.

Senior Garrett Kimbrel from Renton, Wash., was an outfielder during his first two seasons at WSU before moving to the mound last season where he made six appearances out of the bullpen.

Tommy Tribbett, a redshirt-senior from Colfax, Wash.,

redshirt-sophomore Matt Crowe from Kennewich, Wash., and sophomore Zach Miller from Yelm, Wash., have all been slowed by injury during their collegiate careers. Crowe and Miller have yet to appear in a Cougar uniform.

"Garrett is coming off a position change and Tommy is coming off injury," Marbut said. "Both were beat up in the fall which didn't help, but they both will have a chance to get some time and I think they can contribute."

"Matt Crowe had surgery a couple of years ago and slowly has been able to work himself into the mix."

"Zach Miller is coming off labrum surgery. He will have to use 2008 as a redshirt year, but he is getting in better shape so he can contribute down the road."

Freshman David Stilley from Silverdale Wash., joined the Cougars in January, but will spend 2008 recovering from injury.

"David Stilley had Tommy John surgery in April, so we do not expect him to pitch this year, but he is a guy we are excited about for our future."

SCHEDULE

Washington State opens the season at home Feb. 22-24 against Creighton. The Cougars also host a three-game series against Wright State Feb. 29-March 2 and a four-game set against Kent State March 7-9.

"We are playing at home earlier than we have in the past and that is exciting for us," Marbut said. "Creighton, Wright State and Kent State are quality mid-major teams. All three were in a NCAA regional two years ago and Creighton and Kent State were there last year."

The Cougars travel to UNLV for two-game series Feb. 26-27 and play at Kansas State March 11, at Wichita State March 12 and four games at Oklahoma March 14-16.

"UNLV is a place where you have to pitch well if you are going to win," Marbut said. "Our spring break against Kansas State, Wichita State and Oklahoma will put us up against three outstanding programs."

Other nonconference home dates include Gonzaga March 25 and April 22, a four-game series against UC Davis April 4-6, and a three-game set against San Jose State April 25-27. The Cougars play at Santa Clara March 31, at Gonzaga April 8 and May 13, and at BYU May 6-7.

"Our nonconference schedule is demanding, but I think we have the maturity to handle it as we get ready for the Pac-10 season," Marbut said.

Washington State opens Pacific-10 play at home against California March 20-22. The Cougars will host 2007 Pac-10 champion and NCAA College World Series participant Arizona State April 11-13, two-time defending national champion Oregon State, May 3-5. WSU wraps up the regular season at home May 23-25 hosting USC.

The Cougars' conference road series will take place against Stanford March 28-30, Arizona April 18-20, Washington May 9-11 and UCLA May 16-18. The Wildcats advanced to a NCAA regional last season and UCLA was a NCAA super regional participant.

"The conference speaks for itself and there is no question in my mind it is the best in the country," Marbut said. "There are five or six teams that can win the conference. Our goal is to finish in the top half and we have to continue to improve to reach that goal."



RECRUITS FOR 2009

Washington State Head Coach Donnie Marbut announced Nov. 15, 2007 that 10 student-athletes each signed a National Letter of Intent to play baseball for the Cougars beginning in 2009.

Donnie Marbut Quotes

(On the class overall)

"I am so proud of the work of my assistant coaches Travis Jewett and Gregg Swenson. Once again, some of the top players in the state of Washington will be Cougars. In addition, we went out of state and landed some of the best talent in the West. For us to compete for a Pac-10 title, we must continue this kind of class. Travis and Gregg have outdone themselves this year."

(On the depth of the class)

"We have added depth to our pitching as well as speed and defense to our program. We feel really good about adding the left-handed arms and left-handed bats we went after. This is a group that has the potential to make a big impact in the Pacific-10 Conference."

(On the size of the class)

"To have this many student-athletes commit this early is a sign we are a program moving in the right direction. It's important to sign the ones you want in the fall and we definitely did that."

(On the character of the student-athletes)

"This is a group of outstanding young men who are not only good baseball players, but quality students, and even better people. To have nine of the 10 with a grade point average of 3.5 or better is really impressive. It is so fun to work with players who are dedicated in the classroom."

(On recruits possibly turning pro)

"Like every year we have signed players who are getting a lot of attention from the professional ranks. The neat thing about this class is to a man they all love Pullman can't wait to be Cougars."

Kyle Buchanan, Catcher, Auburn, Wash. (Auburn HS)

Buchanan is a three-time All-South Puget Sound League selection and was a member of the USA Under-18 national team. He is a three-year starter for head coach Tim Kuykendall and helped the Trojans to a 25-3 mark and 3A State runner-up finish.

Anthony Drobnick, RHP/3B, Seattle, Wash. (Seattle Prep)

Drobnick was named co-Most Valuable Player in the Seattle Metro League last season. He was a 3A All-State pitcher while helping lead the Panthers, coached by former WSU pitcher Matt O'Brien, to a 20-4 record. Academically, he is a two-time member of the Dean's List at Seattle Prep.

Bobby Hansen, LHP, Monument, Colo. (Lewis-Palmer HS)

Hansen was a 5A Metro Conference First Team selection as a pitcher in 2007 under the guidance of head coach Chuck Milo. He received honorable mention All-State academic accolades last season.

Kyle Johnson, OF, Couer d'Alene, Idaho (Lake City HS)

Johnson was a member of State champion football and baseball teams as a junior. He was an All-Inland Empire League first team honoree in 2007 after swiping 31 bases in 28 games and was named an Idaho Top Scholar.

Derek Jones, LHP/OF, Snohomish, Wash. (Snohomish HS)

Jones was a WIAA First Team All-State selection while leading the Panthers to a 22-5 record and a 2007 State runner-up finish. He is a two-time All North Westco first team selection while playing for Kim Hammons.

David Olson, LHP/IF, Auburn, Wash. (Auburn HS)

Olson logged a 9-0 record with a 1.81 earned run average on the mound last season while batting .400 with 41 runs batted in at the plate. He hit two grand slams during a game in late March and three weeks later pitched a no-hitter. A high school teammate of Buchanan, he is a two-time All-South Puget Sound League selection and has been a member of the honor roll at Auburn for the last three years.

Bryan Peterson, OF, Spokane, Wash. (West Valley HS)

Peterson, playing for Don O'Neal, was a First Team All-State and Louisville Slugger honorable mention All-America honoree in 2007 while leading the Great Northern League in home runs and RBI. As a quarterback this fall, he broke six Spokane Area passing records, including three held by WSU alum Mark Rypien.

Tommy Richards, OF, Bend, Ore. (Bend HS)

Richards was First-Team All-Intermountain Conference as a shortstop and Second-Team All-IMC as a pitcher last season while playing for Brian Crook. During his junior campaign he garnered Second-Team All-IMC honors as a second baseman.

Rusty Shellhorn, LHP, Liberty Lake, Wash. (Central Valley HS)

Shellhorn logged 70 strikeouts in 47 innings last season for head coach Barry Poffenroth. He posted a 5-3 record with a 2.23 ERA and was named Second-Team All-Greater Spokane League.

Jacobs Theis, RHP, Brier, Wash. (Mountlake Terrace HS)

Theis was 7-1 on the mound for coach Andrew Watters and earned First-Team Wesco South 4A honors as a pitcher. He also earned the league defensive player of the year award.