The 2015 baseball season is just around the corner and the Meridian Community College baseball team is gearing up for an historic season. The Eagles are set to begin the new season February 7 at Scaggs Field against Alabama Southern Community College, but one big change is on the horizon for the program. MCC will now compete as a part of the MACJC for the first time since 2008 where the program enjoyed a great deal of success. The Eagles captured three MACJC State Championships (2005, 2006, 2008) during that span and the program is setting the bar high for 2015.

“We are excited to get this season underway,” said MCC head coach Dillon Sudduth. “We have as much depth on the mound as we have had around here in a while and that’s where games are won and lost. It’s always a process to get a team ready to compete and this team has bought in and done everything we have asked them to do, on and off the field. The boys have worked hard over the past year preparing and bring a real blue collar mentality to the field every day.”

MCC will be looking for that type of experience and depth on the mound in 2015 to lead the Eagles to success. MCC will return 10 pitchers for the season and with the addition of nine new faces on the staff, things look very promising on the mound for the Eagles.

Sophomore Goose Yates leads the way after having a superb 2015 season for the green and white. Yates was an All-Region performer for MCC and finished the season with a 5-3 record on the hill. Yates compiled a 3.00 ERA and collected 45 strikeouts in 57 innings worked.

Yates returns to the team this season along with sophomores Jake Smith, Andrew Crook, Josh Curtis, Bryant Johnston, Jonathan Porter, Dustin Smith, Michael Druhan, Chandler Blakeney, and Baylor Obert.

Freshmen Austin Harrison, Josh Rich, Hunter Mullis, Colby Shaw, Kyle Bayles, Drew Smith, Ryan Lane, Cade Noble, and Jarred Scott add new faces to the staff.

The new season will also bring plenty of changes at several positions on the field for MCC and one of those is at catcher. Sophomore Dalton Thomas will receive the bulk of the catching duties this spring for the Eagles. Thomas was an All-Region performer in 2014 for MCC and led the team in several offensive categories. Thomas played in the outfield and at first base a season ago for the Eagles. Jared Savell, Dalton Smith, and Austin Harrison round out the catching corps.

“You would be hard pressed to find a more well-rounded catcher than Thomas,” Sudduth said. “Not only from a skill level but also serving as an extension of the coaches.”
The MCC infield will be breaking in a pair of freshmen middle infielders. Freshmen Jaylon Keys, Matt Berler, Kyle Bayles, and Daniel Hill provide some strong options in the middle infield. They will be anchored by returning starting first baseman Scott Votaw with Dustin Smith and Goose Yates manning the hot corner.

“This group takes pride in defending,” added Sudduth. “With the infield defense we have in place, our pitching staff should feel extremely confident pitching to contact.”

The outfield competition will be fierce as only sophomore right fielder Michael Druhan returns with experience. Andrew Crook is returning from injury to challenge for playing time in centerfield while Trace Hamby, Eason Weeks, Kyle Bayles, Daniel Hill, Baylor Obert, and Chance McDonald will all be battling for playing time.

“It’s going to be interesting to see who separates themselves from this group. We have improved our overall athleticism through recruiting and development.”

The 2015 schedule for the Eagles will also provide for a challenge, but the Eagles will enjoy five home dates to open the season. MCC will also host the 2015 Rush Invitational Tournament at Scaggs Field with Jones County Junior College, Jefferson College, Wallace-Hanceville, and Bishop State taking part in the event. MCC will also play MACJC home doubleheaders at Scaggs Field against East Central, Pearl River, Mississippi Delta, Northwest, Southwest, Northeast, and Itawamba. The Eagles will open conference play March 7 on the road at Jones and will also play on the road at East Mississippi Community College March 31.