



Coach Amber Reid watches Brittney Palmer throw during practice.

Clean slate — building a softball program from scratch

By Phil Goble Jr.

phil@surrymessenger.com

DOBSON — There were no players on the roster when Amber Reid became coach of the Surry Community College softball team.

For that matter, there were no uniforms, no equipment, no field, no history, no tradition. Nothing.

That is the bane of being the first coach in the program's history.

It's also the exciting part of being the first coach in the program's history.

"It's been the biggest challenge I've ever faced," Reid said Wednesday. "Coming into this, I'm thinking about UNCG, where I came from. I knew I'd have to be flexible. I didn't realize how flexible."

Reid's life has been learn on the fly.

She did not get hired at Surry Community until the end of July — after most high school tournaments

were done.

That meant the only recruiting she could do was on campus.

“We sent out a mass email at the start of the fall semester,” Reid said. “Initially, I got a lot of comments and emails back.”

But many potential players did not realize the level of play and commitment needed. SCC plays in Region X of the National Junior College Athletic Association. It is a D-I NJCAA program.

So, Reid held tryouts.

That yielded her a squad of about 15 players.

But that was not all.

“Not only did I not have any recruits, but all the other schools already had their fall schedules full,” she said.

Yep — all dressed up with no place to play. OK, not all dressed up. The team had some Dry-FIT tops with the school logo on the front and their names and numbers on the back.

As for the game? Reid was able to get a local travel team to put together a group of players for a scrimmage.

That was it.

Then, school hit, Four of the 15 players also were on the SCC volleyball team. They left softball for the gym during the fall.

“The fall was rough,” Reid said. “When we left out for Christmas, I had 11 players.”

Now, she has nine — with the program opener set for Feb. 14 in South Carolina.

She’s sending out another mass email this semester in hopes of drawing more players.

It’s been difficult, but fun.

“I wanted to see what I had, what I was made of,” said Reid, who played high school ball at East Surry and came to SCC from Mount Airy Middle where she coached the game. “There have been a lot of fun things. Spending the money was no problem! I think the girls will like their uniforms. We’re lucky to have Fisher River Park agree to let us play there.”

The Lady Knights will use Field No. 3 at Fisher River, the one behind the concession stand. County recreation officials are allowing Reid to bring in signs and banners to give the space a “home field” feel to it. Instructor Lynn Templeton’s class is putting together a storage building at the field for equipment. Surry has purchased a temporary field to reduce the slo-pitch fence line of 390 feet to a fast-pitch border of 220 feet.

“I want them (players) to feel like they are in a class-A facility like the boys,” she said, referring to Angus Tucker Field.

It’s a lot to handle for any coach, but Reid has some mentoring help — Athletics Director Mark Tucker started the baseball program.

“She’s done an outstanding job,” Tucker said. “We obviously realize we got a late start and that factors into the amount of players we do have. I think of the challenges we had, which are the some of the same ones she’s had. There are really a lot of similarities.”

So far, though, Tucker has been impressed with his new coach.

“Amber is really a perfectionist,” he said. “She wants everything done right. I think once things get off the ground here and we get the program going, it’ll be an outstanding program.”

To do that, players will be key. Recruiting is something Reid knows is needed — and she’s ready to learn.

“That’s one area my skills lack,” she said.

Reid stays in touch with Jennifer Herzig, coach at UNCG, who has offered to help with contacts and prospects.

“She’s been a great resource,” Reid said. “She gave me some contacts in different areas.”

Reid is focusing, at first, on the local area — Surry County, Yadkin County, Wilkes County and Stokes County, mainly.

“I believe this area is loaded with softball talent,” the coach said. “It’s just a matter of getting them here. We tried to hit a lot of areas to get the word out.”

Reid’s sister, Shawn Watson, graduated from East Surry last year and is on the team.

“That’s helped getting going, too,” Reid said, noting that her connections to local squads will be a great resource for players.

Reid hopes to have 18 players on the squad. She only has one scholarship to parcel out, but hopes to take a page from basketball coach Eddie Wilmoth’s fundraising playbook. Wilmoth raised money for additional scholarships when the basketball team started a year ago.

All of that work is for one goal, Reid said.

“I hope to be where the baseball team is one day,” she said.

The Knights have been ranked nationally and gone deep into the NJCAA playoffs.

That dream hinges on Reid — who will be trying to build a foundation the baseball program put down years ago.

“It’s incredibly scary on one hand,” she said. “At the same time, that’s why you’re here. That’s why you’re in your position.”

That is the joy of being the first coach in the history of the program.