

Renegade baseball team ready to take the field

By **KYLE NORDEEN**
Sports editor

The Renegade baseball team has proven to be quite a special program these past couple of seasons.



their team this year and they are going to help me develop these guys into the type of system or program that we are looking for."

Second-year centerfielder Rich Bermudez and third-

enforces remains.

"It all comes down to pitching and defense," said Russell.

"Our pitching is pretty old and our defense, a lot of position guys are returning from last year's team. If we can pitch and play defense, we'll have a shot."

Past success is definitely something to be proud of and is something nice to reflect on,

but with passing season, you have to come out and earn it.

These guys know that nothing will be handed for them and that teams will be coming at them with everything they have.

"Coming into every year we say, 'Hey, we haven't won anything this year,'" said Benton.

"We haven't done anything, so we got to earn everything we have. It's not going to just

come to us. Coach Russell has definitely done a good job of keeping us hungry and aggressive."

"We're coming together early," said Bermudez. "We're buying in early and that's the road to success right there."

The team will begin their 2012 schedule on Feb. 3 when it takes on Reedley at home.

Only two more months until baseball is back.

Photo by Kyle Nordeen

Center fielder Rich Bermudez, among a host of other returning Renegades, has been touted as one of the leaders for this year's baseball team.

The team won the state championship in 2010 and was state runners-up last season — and expectations among the players and coaches are high.

The team just wrapped up their Fall Ball schedule, made its final cuts to its roster and is ready to get the season started.

"Our chemistry was good and our overall work ethic was really good," said head coach Julian Russell.

"A lot of guys, by the end of the fall, really bought into our system and it's going to be a good spring for us."

The past two seasons have yielded very tight-knit squads.

The experiences they shared and gained by making it deep into the playoffs the past two seasons are invaluable for the younger guys joining the team this season.

"I think our chemistry is already developed this year, more so at least than last year," Russell said.

"The guys are pretty close. This year's group is pretty family oriented, team oriented at this point."

Leadership from the sophomores and upperclassmen has been one of the most influential factors in quickly developing the team's identity and cohesiveness.

This is just area where the experience gained from participating on the team in either of the last two seasons will prove to be invaluable.

"There's a good group of older guys that have really helped us develop as a team so far," said Russell.

"They already knew what to expect, but we also had a talk earlier in the year about letting them know that it's

year starting pitcher Scott Benton, along with a host of other returning players, have emerged as a pair of leaders for this season's group.

Both also appreciate the trust that Russell has in them by turning to them to help guide this group.

"I definitely take the responsibility of the coach expects me to do," said Bermudez.

"We have a good group of guys, we're all hungry and with the help of a couple other guys on the team, we can try and go back to state. That's our ultimate goal."

"I definitely take that as a positive," Benton said.

"I respect that position because I know that our captains the past few years have played pretty big roles in coming together as a team, which has been pretty big for us."

While there is always a high turnover rate when coaching a junior college team, the formula for success Russell

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