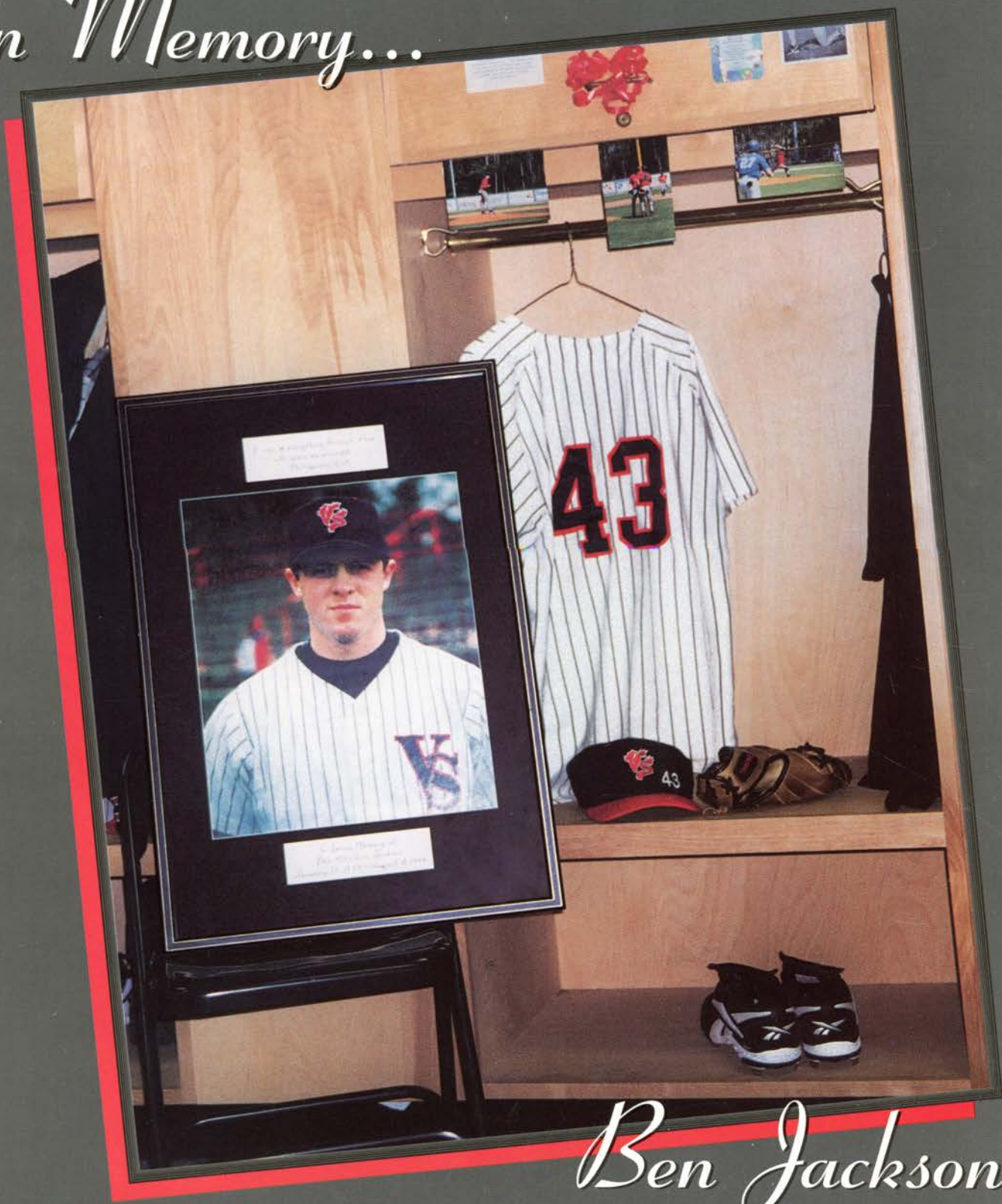


VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY

In Memory...



Ben Jackson
1977-1999

2000 BLAZER BASEBALL

Head Coach Tommy Thomas

Entering his 33rd season as the outstanding head coach of Valdosta State's Blazer baseball team, Tommy Thomas has enjoyed success gained by very few. In 32 seasons, Thomas-led teams have compiled an overall record of 1061-632, a .627 winning percentage. In 1997, he became only the second NCAA Division II coach to win 1000 games, and his 1061 wins are the most among active Division II coaches.

Twenty-one of his 32 teams have reached post-season play, and eight teams, including the 1995 club, have made it to the national tournament with the 1979 team winning the national championship. As a result, Thomas has been the recipient of numerous individual awards and honors. Following the national title year, he was named National Coach of the Year for NCAA Division II by the American Baseball Coaches Association. On seven occasions he has been named regional coach of the year, once in the NAIA Area V (1969) and five times in the NCAA South Atlantic region (1974, 1977,

1979, 1983 and 1985) and once in the South Central region (1995).

The 59-year-old Valdosta native received the BS degree from Valdosta State, where he was a four-year letterman in baseball from 1959-62, ending his career with a .316 batting average. Thomas, who is single, earned the MST degree from Georgia Southern in 1967.

DIVISION II'S WINNINGEST COACHES

	Years	Wins
1. Tommy Thomas, Valdosta State	32	1061
2. Frank Vieira, New Haven	37	954
3. Jack Smitheran, UC Riverside	30	945
4. Bob Riesener, Montevallo	30	930
5. Gary Grob, Winona State	32	911
6. Joe Roberts, Armstrong Atlantic State	20	836
7. Irish O'Reilly, Lewis	21	832
8. Phil Swimley, UC Davis	34	817
9. Guy Murray, Nebraska-Kearney	32	786
10. Bill Aker, Norther Kentucky	28	779



General Information

Name Valdosta State University
 Location Valdosta, Georgia
 Founded 1906
 Enrollment 8650
 President Dr. Hugh C. Bailey
 Colors Red and Black
 Nickname Blazers
 Home Facility Billy Grant Field (1100)
 Conference Gulf South
 National Affiliation NCAA, Division II
 1999 Record 24-31 overall, 9-12 in GSC East

Athletic Staff

Athletic Director Herb Reinhard
 Secretary Debbie Wisenbaker
 Faculty Athletic Representative Bobby Tucker
 Sports Information Director Steve Roberts
 Trainer Russ Hoff

Baseball Staff

Head Coach Tommy Thomas
 Assistant Coach Shannon Jernigan
 Graduate Assistant Jarrett Bridges
 Baseball Trainer Lori Howard
 Student Trainers Kristen Hawkins, Andy Grubbs
 Public Address Greg McIlvain, Bill Postel

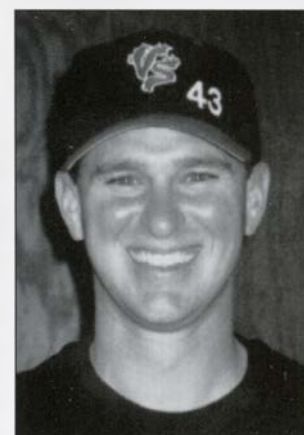
Assistant Coach Shannon Jernigan

Shannon Jernigan, a two-year starting catcher for Valdosta State's 1994 and 1995 clubs who spent two seasons in student and graduate assistant roles, was elevated to the top assistant's position before last season. The 25-year-old Live Oak, Fla., native received his master's degree in 1998 and is a member of VSU's kinesiology and physical education faculty.

Jernigan earned all-conference honors his junior season, hitting .267 and helping the Blazers qualify for the conference tournament. His senior season, he commanded a solid pitching staff which turned in an excellent 3.43 ERA as the Blazers won their first Gulf South Conference championship. That team also won the South Central Regional and returned to the Division II World Series for the first time since 1985, finishing third.

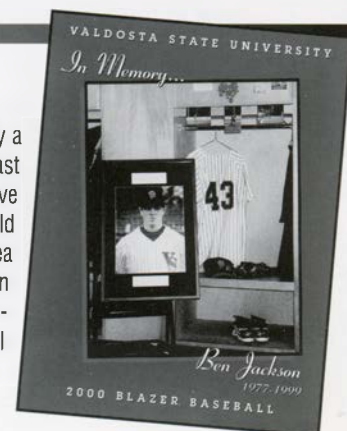
As Thomas's top assistant, Jernigan, who married to the former Jill Vickers, an admissions counselor at VSU, has assumed the lion's share of recruiting duties in addition to the everyday operation of the baseball program. Thomas considers his top aide an integral part of his program and predicts a bright future in the sport.

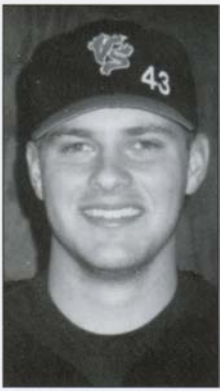
"Shannon has grown up in this program and will continue to be a tremendous asset," Thomas said. "I have great confidence in his coaching, teaching and recruiting ability. He has unbelievable patience, which makes him a valuable teacher and mentor."



On the Cover

The baseball locker of the late Ben Jackson, tragically killed by a lightning strike while pitching in a summer league game last August, is the subject of this year's cover. The Blazers have dedicated the 2000 season to the memory of Jackson, who would have been a senior. Jackson's portrait hangs in the reception area of VSU's baseball fieldhouse, and his No. 43 will be displayed on players' and coaches' caps. Jackson, a lefthander, compiled a 13-8 record in his three seasons and was expected to be an integral part of the Blazers' 2000 staff.





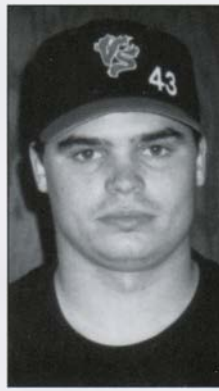
Jeff Gillis
Pitcher
5-11 Senior
Acworth, GA

1



Toby Evans
Outfield
5-8 Junior
Dunedin, FL

4



Lance Walker
Outfield
6-0 Junior
Valdosta, GA

7



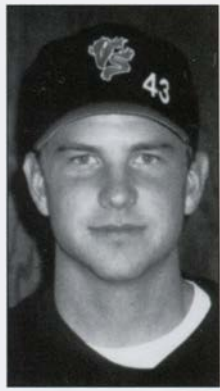
Eddie Rodriguez
Infield
5-7 Junior
Valdosta, GA

9



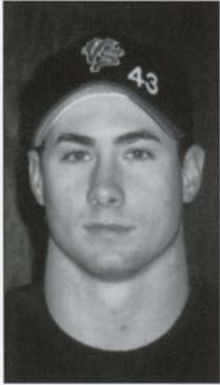
Andy Boutwell
Pitcher
6-1 Junior
Valdosta, GA

12



Chad Zaniewski
Outfield
5-11 Senior
West Palm Beach, FL

13



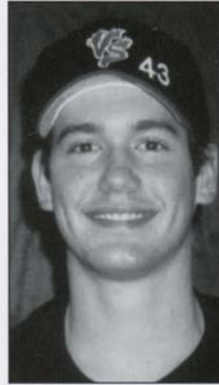
Ryan Page
Second Base
5-9 Junior
Middleburg, FL

24



Blake Wilson
Outfield
6-2 Senior
Fitzgerald, GA

25



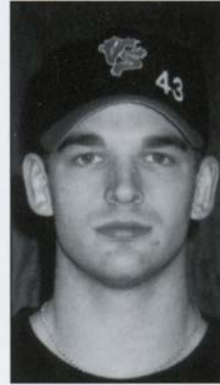
Eric Stiefel
Catcher
6-0 Sophomore
Valdosta, GA

26



Blake Lynn
Pitcher
5-11 Sophomore
Venice, FL

27



Truett Taylor
Pitcher
6-2 Junior
Valdosta, GA

29



Dustin Hudson
First Base
6-1 Junior
Waycross, GA

30



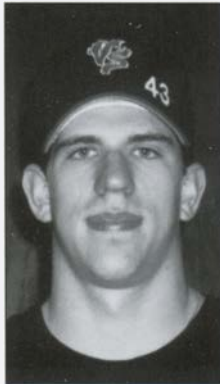
Michael Smith
Pitcher
6-5 Freshman
Valdosta, GA

44



Jason Van Nus
Pitcher
6-3 Freshman
Valdosta, GA

46



Daniel Hall
Pitcher
6-4 Freshman
Gainesville, FL

49



Brent Bailey
Pitcher
6-0 Senior
St. Simons Island, GA

54

2000 Blazer Baseball Roster

Number and Name	Bats/Throws	Birthday	Height	Weight	Class	Hometown and High School
PITCHERS						
54 Brent Bailey	L-L	6-16-78	6-0	195	Senior	St. Simons Island, GA (Glynn Academy)
34 Jeremy Baisden	R-R	4-3-79	6-1	190	Junior	Lake City, FL (Columbia)
20 Brett Bennett	R-R	2-17-80	6-2	210	Sophomore	Springfield, GA (Effingham County)
12 Andy Boutwell	L-R	7-24-79	6-1	180	Junior	Valdosta, GA (Valdosta)
1 Jeff Gillis	R-R	12-12-77	5-11	190	Senior	Acworth, GA (Harrison)
22 Curt Gilmore	R-R	12-15-78	6-4	195	Junior	Ocala, FL (Forest)
49 Daniel Hall	R-R	6-17-80	6-4	195	Freshman	Gainesville, FL (Gainesville)
41 Matt Harrelson	R-R	7-6-79	6-3	200	Freshman	Marietta, GA (Marietta)
27 Blake Lynn	R-R	11-21-79	5-11	165	Sophomore	Venice, FL (Venice)
44 Michael Smith	L-L	7-8-81	6-5	190	Freshman	Valdosta, GA (Valdosta)
29 Truett Taylor	L-L	6-15-78	6-2	180	Junior	Valdosta, GA (Lowndes)
46 Jason Van Nus	R-R	7-7-81	6-3	185	Freshman	Valdosta, GA (Lowndes)
CATCHERS						
19 Dan Kerrigan	R-R	8-3-78	6-1	195	Senior	St. Petersburg, FL (Northeast)
35 Dwight Pope	R-R	2-27-78	5-11	175	Senior	Augusta, GA (Westside)
26 Eric Stiefel	R-R	3-16-80	6-0	195	Sophomore	Valdosta, GA (Valdosta)
INFIELDERS						
17 Jason Bulger	R-R	12-6-78	6-4	210	Junior	Snellville, GA (Brookwood)
33 Alex Gray	R-R	6-9-78	6-3	220	Junior	Marietta, GA (Walton)
30 Dustin Hudson	L-R	8-23-78	6-1	210	Junior	Waycross, GA (Ware County)
16 Greg Olsen	R-R	2-18-80	6-0	185	Sophomore	Clearwater, FL (Countryside)
24 Ryan Page	R-R	9-8-78	5-9	165	Junior	Middleburg, FL (Middleburg)
9 Eddie Rodriguez	S-R	8-30-79	5-7	165	Junior	Valdosta, GA (Phillips)
39 Scott Simpson	R-R	5-8-81	6-2	180	Freshman	Valdosta, GA (Lowndes)
23 Jamie Thomas	R-R	10-24-78	5-8	185	Junior	Valdosta, GA (Valdosta)
OUTFIELDERS						
37 Kyle Conger	R-R	10-16-80	6-0	185	Freshman	Moultrie, GA (Colquitt)
4 Toby Evans	R-R	12-1-78	5-8	165	Junior	Dunedin, FL (Dunedin)
7 Lance Walker	L-L	5-19-79	6-0	185	Junior	Valdosta, GA (Valdosta)
25 Blake Wilson	L-L	11-24-76	6-2	190	Senior	Fitzgerald, GA (Fitzgerald)
13 Chad Zaniewski	R-R	10-6-77	5-11	185	Senior	West Palm Beach, FL (John I. Leonard)



Greg Olsen
Infield
6-0 Sophomore
Clearwater, FL

16



Jason Bulger
Third Base
6-4 Junior
Snellville, GA

17



Dan Kerrigan
Catcher
6-1 Senior
St. Petersburg, FL

19



Brett Bennett
Pitcher
6-2 Sophomore
Springfield, GA

20



Curt Gilmore
Pitcher
6-4 Junior
Ocala, FL

22



Jamie Thomas
Utility
5-8 Junior
Valdosta, GA

23



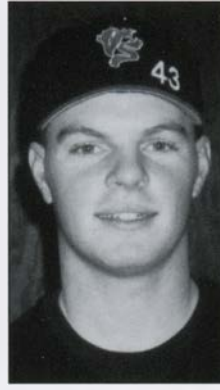
Alex Gray
First Base
6-3 Junior
Marietta, GA

33



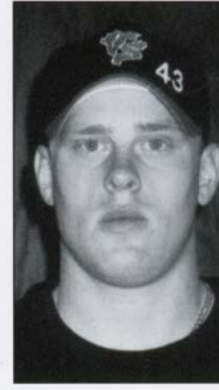
Jeremy Baisden
Pitcher
6-1 Junior
Madison, FL

34



Dwight Pope
Catcher
5-11 Senior
Augusta, GA

35



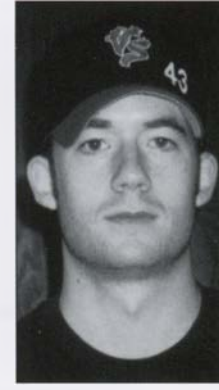
Kyle Conger
Outfield
6-0 Freshman
Moultrie, GA

37



Scott Simpson
Shortstop
6-2 Freshman
Valdosta, GA

39



Matt Harrelson
Pitcher
6-3 Freshman
Marietta, GA

41

2000 Outlook...

Valdosta State suffered many losses following 1999's disappointing 24-31 season. Gone is the leading hitter, the career home run leader and five front-line pitchers. However, the most tragic loss was the untimely death of rising senior Ben Jackson, struck down by lightning during a summer game in his hometown of Thomasville.

Blazer head coach Tommy Thomas, beginning his 33rd season, and his team have dedicated the 2000 campaign to Jackson's memory. They'll make it official in a ceremony before the Florida Southern game February 12.

Although Thomas bemoans the loss of his top hitters and pitchers, he won't miss a defense which made 138 errors that led to 101 unearned runs. He believes that defense has been dramatically improved with the addition of three new starters in the infield. Much better team speed has also been added to the equation.

"I'll be terribly disappointed if we're not a much improved defensive club," the veteran mentor said. "And I think with the added speed we'll be more exciting offensively. A big key, as always, is pitching, and with so many new faces the jury is still out."

In addition to the three new starters around the infield, VSU will have two new faces in the outfield to go along with the renovated pitching staff.

The familiarity on the Blazer roster is behind the plate where seniors Dwight Pope (.322) and Dan Kerrigan (.284) return. Like last year, the duo will

platoon. Other returning starters are junior third baseman Jason Bulger (.347, 7 HR, 36 RBI) and senior leftfielder Chad Zaniewski (.335, 34 RBI, 12 SB).

The new? The right side of the infield will consist of highly regarded junior college transfers. Alex Gray (.372 at Young Harris) and Dustin Hudson (.330 at Florida CC-Jax) will play first, and Ryan Page (.333, 30 SB at Florida CC-Jax) will open at second. True freshman Scott Simpson (.515 at state AAAA runnerup Lowndes-Valdosta) won the starting job at shortstop by virtue of an outstanding performance offensively and defensively in the fall. JC transfer Eddie Rodriguez (.333 at Lake-Sumter CC) is a capable backup at any infield spot.

Junior Jamie Thomas (.289, 6 HR) started 41 games at different positions last season and will be a valuable utility player this year (infield, outfield and pitching). Sophomore Greg Olsen hit .256 in 43 at bats when he filled in at shortstop late last year. This year he'll primarily back up Bulger at third.

Joining Zaniewski in the outfield will be JC transfer Toby Evans (.405 at St. Petersburg) in center and junior speedster Lance Walker (.195 in 41 ABs) in right. Senior Blake Wilson (.289), sophomore Eric Stiefel and freshman Kyle Conger will provide depth.

There is no shortage of arms in the pitching department as Thomas can call as many as 14

players to the hill. The leading returnee is junior Andy Boutwell (4-3, 6.47 ERA, 67 Ks in 56 innings), who threw a no-hitter in his final 1999 start against West Alabama. Senior lefthander Brent Bailey (2-2, 5.23, 2 saves, 58 Ks in 41 innings) will again use a tremendously effective change of pace to anchor the bullpen.

Senior righthander Jeff Gillis (3-2, 7.52) has split his time between the mound and the infield in three VSU seasons. The emphasis this year will be in the pitching department.

Four transfers and five freshmen could be part of the pitching answers. Former Lowndes-Valdosta southpaw Truett Taylor and righthander Jeremy Baisden come in from North Florida JC, and righthander Curt Gilmore was recruited from Pensacola JC. Gilmore was particularly impressive in the fall, allowing no earned runs in 15 innings of work.

The Blazers added sophomore righthander Brett Bennett (Middle Georgia) this semester. Two local freshmen, Lowndes' Jason Van Nus and Valdosta's Michael Smith, round out the staff.

The schedule as always is filled with preseason top 30 teams including Gulf South Conference rivals Alabama-Huntsville, North Alabama and Delta State. Perennial powers Florida Southern, North Florida, Tampa, SIU-Edwardsville, Kennesaw State, Georgia College & State, Columbus State and St. Leo dot the 56-game slate which begins February 4 at home against Albany State.

The Record Book

Individual - Game

Most ABs	7, 14 players tied
Most Runs	5, Steve Crawford, '68 David DeMersseman, '77, June Munford, '83 Mike White, '85
Most Hits	6, Mike Jones, '85
Most 2Bs	3, Sam Bowen, '74 Seo Torres, '80, June Munford, '83 Mike Cassala, '88, Darrien Teals, '88 Tom White, '91
Most 3Bs	2, 9 players tied
Most HRs	3, Gene Felts, '72 Bobby McDonald, '97
Most HRs: Inning	2, Billy Tyler, '76 Sal Amadeo, '78
Most TBs	13, Gene Felts, '72 Bobby McDonald, '97
Most RBIs	9, Rob Busch, '85
Most SBs	6, Claude Speck, '67
Most Put Outs	20, Kevin Spooner, '85
Most Assists	10, John Gordon, '86
Most Errors	4, 5 players tied
Most IP	15, Danny Chadwick, '73
Most Ks	18, Kelly Scott, '80
Perfect Game	Leroy Purdy, '70
No Hitters	Eddie Fisher, '69 Steve Sorgious, '70, Dan Darden, '74 Dwayne Cushman, '94

Individual - Season

Best B.A.	.433, Chuck Devane, '83
Best Slugging %	.839, Cecil Whitehead, '78
Most AB	271, Mike Jones, '85
Most Runs	96, Andy Anthony, '85
Most Hits	114, Mike Jones, '85
Most 2Bs	23, JoJo Blaha, '86
Most 3Bs	8, Dan Darden, '75
Most HRs	23, Bobby McDonald, '97
Most Consecutive Hits	9, Rob Bush, '85
Longest Hitting Streak	25, Rusty Brown, '90
Most Extra Base Hits	39, JoJo Blaha, '86 Kevin Spooner, '85
Most Total Bases	166, Mike Jones, '85
Most RBIs	76, JoJo Blaha, '85
Most BBs (drawn)	91, Richie Johnson, '82
Most SBs	46, Mike White, '85
Most Appearances	25, Mike Lee, '92
Most IP	127.1, Jeff Agerter, '83
Most Consecutive Shutout Innings	28.2, Jimmy Wall, '77
Most Ks	112, Bryan Shover, '93
Most Ks per 9 innings	12.7, Sam Bowen, '73
Most Wins	13, Jeff Agerter, '82
Most Decisions	17, Jeff Agerter, '82
Most Saves	8, Chuck Beale, '77
Best ERA	0.78, Mike Perry, '64
Most Shutouts	3, 9 players tied

Individual - Career

Best B.A.	.390, John Gordon, '86-87
Best Slugging %	.643, Cecil Whitehead, '76-78
Most ABs	751, Craig Viers, '75-78
Most Runs	183, Sal Amadeo, '77-79
Most Hits	261, Bobby McDonald, '96-99
Most 2Bs	52, JoJo Blaha, '84-87
Most 3Bs	18, Gene Felts, '71-74 Craig Viers, '75-78

Most HRs	44, Bobby McDonald, '96-99
Most TBs	445, JoJo Blaha, '84-87
Most RBIs	209, JoJo Blaha, '84-87
Most SBs	91, Sal Amadeo, '77-79
Most Appearances	70, Ted West, '85-88
Most IP	353, Jimmy Wall, '77-80
Most Ks	261, Bryan Shover, '92-A
Most Wins	31, Bill Petty, '74-77 Jimmy Wall, '77-80
Best Winning Percentage	.950, Kelly Scott, '79-80
Most Saves	11, Chuck Beale, '76-77
Best ERA	1.48, Eddie Fisher, '66-69
Most Shutouts	7, Bill Petty, '74-77

Team - Game

Most Runs	26 vs. GA Southwestern, '96
Most Runs: Inning	13 vs. Jacksonville State, '79 Fort Valley State, '85
Most Hits	30 vs. Shippensburg, '85
Most RBIs	20 vs. 6 teams
Most 2Bs	8 vs. Columbus, '83 Wofford, '91, Columbus, '91
Most 3Bs	4 vs. Oglethorpe, '65 Ouachita Baptist, '70, Fort Valley State, '83
Most HRs	6 vs. Eckerd, '85
Most Runs Against	28 vs. Jacksonville State, '90
Most Runs: Both Teams	39 vs. N. Ala. (18-21), '95
Most Extra Base Hits	11 vs. Columbus, '83
Most TBs	39 vs. Fort Valley State, '83
Most Errors	9 vs. Florida Southern, '89
Most SBs	13 vs. Armstrong State, '68
Most DPs	5 vs. New Orleans, '74
Most Innings	17 vs. David Lipscomb, '68

Team - Season

Most Games	71, 1982
Most Wins	49, 1982
Most Consecutive Wins	22, 1983
Best Winning Percentage	.804 (45-11), 1980
Most Losses	31, 1989, 1990, 1999
Best Batting Average	.343, 1985
Worst Batting Average	.216, 1957
Best Slugging Percentage	.566, 1985
Most ABs	2261, 1985
Most Runs	620, 1985
Most Runs Per Game	9.8, 1986
Most Times Shut Out	8, 1976
Fewest Runs Allowed Per Game	2.3, 1960
Most Hits	776, 1985
Most 2Bs	144, 1985
Most 3Bs	31, 1985
Most HRs	99, 1985
Most Extra Base Hits	274, 1985
Most Total Bases	1279, 1985
Most RBIs	545, 1985
Most Stolen Bases	179, 1985
Most Double Plays	67, 1985
Best Fielding Percentage	.964, 1965
Best Innings Pitched	577.1, 1982
Most Strikeouts	488, 1995
Most Walks	404, 1981
Best ERA	1.45, 1964
Worst ERA	7.36, 1990
Most Shutouts	12, 1973
Most Consecutive Shutouts	4, 1971

2000 Blazer Schedule

FEBRUARY

4, Fri.	Albany State	Valdosta	3 pm
5, Sat.	Tampa	Tampa, FL	4 pm
6, Sun.	Tampa	Tampa, FL	1 pm
8, Tue.	GA SW State	Americus	3 pm
10, Thu.	Florida A&M	Tallahassee	3 pm
12, Sat.	Florida Southern	Valdosta	2 pm
13, Sun.	Florida Southern	Valdosta	2 pm
15, Tue.	Brewton-Parker	Valdosta	3 pm
18, Fri.	Lewis	Mtgmry, AL	5:30 pm
19, Sat.	SIU-Edwardsville	Mtgmry, AL	5 pm
20, Sun.	Florida Southern	Mtgmry, AL	3 pm
22, Tue.	Thomas University	Thomasville	5 pm

25-27

Fri.-Sun	NIJEM JEWELERS CLASSIC		
25, Fri.	Barry	Valdosta	4:30 pm
26, Sat.	Delta State	Valdosta	4 pm
27, Sun.	Augusta State	Valdosta	2 pm

MARCH

2, Thu.	Florida A&M	Valdosta	5 pm
4, Sat.	St. Leo	St. Leo, FL	1 pm
5, Sun.	Valparaiso	Valdosta	1:30 pm
6, Mon.	IUPUI-Fort Wayne	Valdosta	3 pm
9, Thu.	St. Leo	Valdosta	5 pm
10, Fri.	GA College & State	Valdosta	5 pm
13, Mon.	Albany State	Albany	3 pm
16, Thu.	Brewton-Parker	Mt. Vernon	6 pm
18, Sat.	Montevallo* (2)	Montevallo, AL	3 pm
19, Sun.	Montevallo*	Montevallo, AL	3 pm
22, Wed.	North Florida	Valdosta	5 pm
25, Sat.	West Florida* (2)	Valdosta	1 pm
26, Sun.	West Florida*	Valdosta	2 pm
28, Tue.	GA SW State	Valdosta	3 pm
29, Wed.	Columbus State	Columbus	3 pm
30, Thu.	Kennesaw State (2)	Kennesaw	2:30 pm

APRIL

1, Sat.	West Alabama* (2)	Livingston	4 pm
2, Sun.	West Alabama*	Livingston	2 pm
4, Tue.	GA College & State	Milledgeville	5 pm
6, Thu.	Thomas University	Valdosta	5 pm
8, Sat.	AL-Huntsville* (2)	Valdosta	1 pm
9, Sun.	AL-Huntsville*	Valdosta	2 pm
11, Tue.	North Florida	Jacksonville	5 pm
13, Thu.	Armstrong Atl. St.	Valdosta	5 pm
15, Sat.	West Georgia* (2)	Carrollton	1 pm
16, Sun.	West Georgia*	Carrollton	1 pm
18, Tue.	Armstrong Atl. St.	Savannah	3 pm
19, Wed.	Embry-Riddle	Valdosta	7 pm
21, Fri.	Linc. Memorial* (2)	Harrogate, TN	Noon
22, Sat.	Linc. Memorial*	Harrogate, TN	1 pm
25, Tue.	Columbus State	Valdosta	6 pm
29, Sat.	North Alabama* (2)	Valdosta	1 pm
30, Sun.	North Alabama*	Valdosta	2 pm

MAY

4-7	Gulf South Conference Tournament		
Thu.-Sun.	Site of Western Division Winner		TBA

* Gulf South Conference games

ALL TIMES EASTERN

Blazer Baseball Support Personnel...



Jarrett Bridges
Graduate Assistant



Lori Howard
Baseball Trainer



Kristen Hawkins
Student Trainer



Andy Grubbs
Student Trainer



Greg McIlvain
Game Operations



Bill Postel
Game Operations



Steve Roberts
Sports Information

