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OU lacrosse team one of the best in country

By **Dawn Pauli**, contributing writer

After winning the Midwest Championship last spring, Oakland's **men's lacrosse club team** is energized to begin its new season. The pre-season poll of coaches in the Central Collegiate Lacrosse Association (CCLA) league picks Oakland as number one.

"We're all very excited, 2004 was the best season we've had and everyone feels good about this year. We only graduated one student," said coach Dwayne Hicks. "We've got a really good nucleus of guys playing."

The team defeated the University of Michigan at Notre Dame Prep in Pontiac to win the championship. It was the first time in the team's nine-year history it defeated Michigan while giving the Wolverine team its first loss in 56 conference games against fellow CCLA teams – a record.

"I think the expectations are incredibly high," Hicks said. "When you come off beating Michigan and go on to win the championship, you have to start thinking about the national level and how far you can really go. Many of the guys are seniors and want to go all the way. We have different expectations since this is their last year and they've got to put all their eggs in one basket."

The Michigan win was a double-overtime nail-biter.

"We lost to them earlier in the season, so going into it as the underdogs, we came out and played like we had nothing to lose," Hick said. "And I won't say it was a lucky game, we outplayed them and we were the better team that day."

Winning the championship has other benefits, too. Oakland is now an attractive option for lacrosse players. Fall tryouts currently are under way and the team will be adding seven or eight new players.

"It's a lot easier to recruit when you can say you're one of the best teams in the country," Hicks said. "Kids are putting Oakland at the top of their list. They want a good education, and they want to play good lacrosse. For them, it's a perfect match, and they can get both of them at OU."

This is Hicks' fifth year as the OU coach, previously he was at the University of Notre Dame. This year, Ron Hebert is joining as an assistant coach, bringing 30 years experience. He comes from Cranbrook, where the high school team won the state championship last year.

The men's lacrosse team practices every Tuesday and Thursday from 6 to 8 p.m. on OU's Upper Field.

During the fall season, the team will play an alumni game on Sunday, Oct. 10, at 1 p.m. on the Upper Field and participate in the Wittenburg Tournament in Springfield, Ohio, Saturday, Oct. 16.

"We'll be playing Division III and Division II varsity teams, as opposed to college club teams. They'll be teams with scholarship lacrosse players. For us, it's a step up and it will be very challenging," Hicks said.

The regular lacrosse seasons begins Feb. 25 in Houston, Texas.

Key players on this year's team include Billy Binge, senior attackman, and the pre-season consensus All-American, Matt Kosek, senior midfieler, Nick Panza, junior defense, and Chris Wood, junior goalkeeper.

"The team is looking forward to an exciting year," Hicks said. "I think this will be one of the best years the team has ever had."

For more information on the team, visit the [Men's Lacrosse Club Team](#) Web site.

SUMMARY

After winning the Midwest Championship last spring, Oakland's man's lacrosse club team is energized to begin its new season. The pre-season poll of coaches in the Central Collegiate Lacrosse Association (CCLA) league picks Oakland as number one. And, Oakland is now an attractive option for lacrosse players. Fall tryouts currently are under way and the team will be adding seven or eight new players.

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