

Hutch Baseball Coach Resigns

After eight successful seasons as head coach and 12 seasons in the program altogether, Kyle Crooks has resigned as Hutchinson Community College baseball coach on Monday to take a position at an NCAA school. In his eight seasons as the Blue Dragons' head coach, Crookes won or shared three Jayhawk West championships, won two Region VI crowns, competed in two NJCAA World Series and took Hutchinson all the way to third place in the 2010 World Series.

Crookes leaves with an eight-year record of 292-164. He is second on the career wins list behind only John Burgi (314 wins). His .640 winning percentage ranks third among 10 HCC coaches and his 456 games coached are second behind Burgi.

Crookes came to HCC as an assistant under Andy Sawyers for the 2001 season. In the two years under Sawyers, HCC went 87-27 with one Jayhawk West title and two Region VI West sub-regional crowns. Crookes was retained by John Wentz when he took over the program before the 2003 season. The Blue Dragons went 72-43-1 in the 2003 and 2004 seasons. In 12 seasons, Crookes' combined record at HCC as an assistant and head coach was 451-234-1.

Crookes was hired as the Blue Dragon head coach in the summer of 2004. In his first season as the HCC baseball leader, he took the Blue Dragons to territory that hadn't been charted in 30 years.

After winning a share of the 2005 Jayhawk West championship, Crookes guided the Blue Dragons through a stacked field at the Region VI Tournament. Losing to Garden City in the winner's bracket final, the Blue Dragons navigated their way back to the championship game and defeated Garden City twice to win the program's first Region VI championship since 1975 and earn HCC's first-ever berth in the NJCAA World Series in Grand Junction, Colo.

HCC went 1-2 in Grand Junction in 2005, but rode that wave of momentum to an outright 2006 Jayhawk West crown. HCC went 44-13 in 2006, but a return trip to the World Series was derailed three games into the Region VI tournament.

The Blue Dragons knocked on the door in 2007, 2008 and 2009 and then came 2010.

After a 6-2 loss in mid-April 2010 to Hesston College and then losing 3 of 4 to close the regular season, there weren't many thoughts of Grand Junction as the 2010 postseason started. But a magical roll began as HCC rallied from an early three-run deficit to defeat Allen County to open the Overland Park Regional. HCC dropped the next game to Johnson County, but rallied to defeat Allen again and then knocked off top-seed Johnson County twice in a rain-plagued regional to advance to Wichita.

Hutchinson trailed in every game in the sub-regional and won four of 5. In Wichita, the Blue Dragons survived a six-run ninth by Butler in the opener to win 9-8. HCC then had to work a lot of extra innings over the next two games, defeating Cowley in 13 innings in the winner's bracket final and Seward County in 12 innings to capture the program's third

Region VI championship.

In Grand Junction, HCC went 2-2, losing to No. 1 San Jacinto twice, the second time in the national semifinals.

This past season, the Blue Dragons posted the sixth-most wins in team history in a 40-17 season. The Blue Dragons shared the Jayhawk West championship with Garden City and advanced to the Chanute sub-regional final where they lost to eventual Region VI champion Neosho County.

Crookes' teams have produced one Jayhawk West MVP (Thad Weber in 2006) and one conference freshman of the year (Tanner Lubach in 2012). Lubach was the 2012 Region VI Defensive Player of the Year.

Crookes coached four NJCAA All-Americans in Weber (second team in 2006), Stuart Hoover (third team in 2008), Shawn Lewick (honorable mention in 2010) and Lubach (second team in 2012). The Blue Dragons had 14 first-team, 16 second-team and 16 honorable mention All-Jayhawk West selections as well as seven first-team and four-second team All-Region VI selections in Crookes' eight seasons.

An average of 12 Blue Dragons signed with four-year programs over the past eight seasons and nine players over Crookes' 12 seasons in Hutchinson were drafted by major league teams. Currently Andy Dirks is in the majors with the Detroit Tigers. Weber was briefly called up this season by the Tigers. Mike Zagurski and T.J. Bohn are former Dragons under Crookes who have reached the major leagues.

Blue Dragon Athletic Director Randy Stange said a committee will be formed and the process of hiring a new head coach will begin immediately.

CROOKES' COACHING RECORD

Year	Record	Pct.	League
2005 (HCC)	38-22	.633	21-11
Finish	Region		
T-1st	1st		
2006 (HCC)	44-13	.772	23-9
1st	5th		
2007 (HCC)	30-25	.545	16-16
5th	---		
2008 (HCC)	39-16	.709	25-7
2nd	5th		
2009 (HCC)	29-24	.547	21-11
2nd	7th		
2010 (HCC)	39-24	.619	18-14
4th	1st		
2011 (HCC)	33-23	.589	19-13
5th	6th		
2012 (HCC)	40-17	.702	23-9
T-1st	5th		
Totals	292-164	.640	145-79