

Commodores Conclude Memorable 2014 Season

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The Falmouth Commodores may not have finished their season with a championship victory, but the team certainly made waves on the Cape this 2014 season. Falmouth concluded the summer with a 26-17-2 regular season record, then dominated the Western Division playoffs. Falling to the Yarmouth-Dennis Red Sox in the championship round, the Falmouth Commodores proved unable to pull off one more comeback after an



exhilarating season. The team struggled in late June and early July, but once team transactions were finalized and the Commodores united, the entire dynamic changed. Connections at the plate became more frequent, less fielding errors occurred, and pitchers became unstoppable on the mound.

While all the Commodores pitchers exemplified their dominance against their tough opponents in the Cape, four particular players stood out. One such player is Alex Young (Texas Christian), who with three regular season wins and one playoff win, pitched a total of 38.1 innings for Falmouth. He recorded 36 total strikeouts, eight of which took place in playoffs. Young made an appearance in the 2014 Cape League All Star Game, and recorded a 1.50 ERA at the conclusion of the Commodores' regular season. His best game came on July 31, 2014, as the Falmouth Commodores faced off against the Wareham Gatemen. Young struck out 10 batters in seven innings, with three back-to-back strikeout scenarios.

"Usually, it's routine," commented Young of his consistency on the mound, "just doing the same exact thing pitch after pitch, not even [just] on the mound but in the dugout. I think that plays a huge role in what I did."

Righty Kevin McCanna (Rice) led the pitching staff in wins this season, totaling six out of eight regular season starts. Heading into the playoffs with a 2.47 ERA McCanna reeled in one more win against Hyannis and took the Commodores to the second round of playoffs. The returning Commodore totaled 37 strikeouts, nine of which occurred in the Commodores' playoff run. His two best performances occurred late in the summer, against Chatham July 21, 2014, and against Hyannis in the first round, game two playoff series. In both outings, McCanna struck out six batters and led the Commodores to certain victory.

"I'm very happy with how I pitched," said McCanna after the Commodores' playoff win against the Harbor Hawks, "I wanted to win this game for the team, just [trying] to throw strikes... my defense helped out a lot too."

Another pitcher that helped the Commodores to the top was lefty Matt Hall (Missouri State), who set the team high in strikeouts for this season. Hall struck out 47 opponents in 42.2 innings pitched. He made 13 playoff strikeouts, and 2 strikeouts in the 2014 Cape League All Star Game. In 10 total starts, Hall earned three regular season wins and one playoff win for the Commodores. His best performance came during playoff time, when Falmouth faced the YD Red Sox in the first round of the championship series. Hall struck out 12 in 6.2 innings pitched, earning at least one K each inning on the mound. He also went four innings gaining back-to-back strikeouts.

“It’s been a great experience,” remarked Hall after his final game with the Commodores, “the coaching staff, the atmosphere out here, the fans, and the players [have been] great. I really enjoyed playing out here.”

This fourth Commodores pitcher may not have been the one to start the team off strong, but he sealed the Falmouth wins in the later innings. Garrett Cleavinger (Oregon) was one of the most dependable closers for the Commodores, with 29 regular season strikeouts and a phenomenal playoff appearance. Cleavinger nearly recorded an ‘immaculate inning’ in the Commodores’ final playoff game against the Harbor Hawks, striking out three straight batters in only seven pitches. Striking out the side was no foreign concept to the lefty, as he had previously done so in four Falmouth games this year. Cleavinger earned two saves this season against Orleans and Wareham in late July. He allowed only 11 hits in his 14 games played, and left opponents shaking as they stepped into the batter’s box.

“[There is] another good group of guys here in Falmouth, and hopefully we can make another run,” said Cleavinger upon arriving in the Cape in early July, “the thing I have changed the most is being more consistent and throwing more strikes.

Cleavinger’s impressive ninth inning in the playoffs was just one of the Commodores’ great defensive moments of the season. This season’s most breath-taking moment came against the Cotuit Kettleers in the second round of playoffs. Bottom of the ninth with one out, a ball went sailing into left field. While the Commodores held a decent lead, a Kettleers home run was not how Falmouth wanted to end the series. Left fielder Boomer White (Texas A&M) tracked backwards, and just as the ball began to drop over the fence, White hopped and snagged it from the other side before it reached the ground. White held the ball high in his glove to prove he caught it, keeping Cotuit off the diamond and sealing Falmouth’s 10-2 win. Another great defenseman for Falmouth this 2014 season was outfielder Steven Duggar (Clemson). Duggar’s arm from right field managed to throw two runners out at home plate, creating double plays for the Commodores and keeping with the solid Falmouth defense.

Duggar was one player whose talents were equally as appreciated at the plate. As one of the Commodores’ most vital offensive attackers, Duggar led the team in stolen bases. Playing 47 games total games this season, he stole 15 bases in 21 attempts. When asked about his consistency he explained that in order to steal the bases, he needed to effectively reach them. That he did, recording 60 hits in 188 at-bats. Duggar’s hard work and determination kept Falmouth’s late-season winning streak strong as the team made its way into the playoff rounds.

“I’m excited to be able to play with this group of guys,” commented Duggar on his mindset as the Commodores prepared for the championship round, “It’s been a fun summer, and I wouldn’t trade it for the world.”

Conner Hale (Louisiana State) proved another strong asset from the batter’s box. As a returner to the Falmouth squad, Hale led the team in RBIs this 2014 season. Earning 45 total, he recorded a whopping seven in the Commodores’ playoff run. Hale batted a .327 and made 65 hits. His best performance came in game two of the Cotuit series where he recorded four RBIs, all of which came with two outs in the inning.

“I just try to go up there and get a good swing on the ball,” explained Hale after his impressive playoff performance, “I feel the same [under pressure] whether it’s one out, no outs, or two outs.”

Finally, one of the most discussed members of the Commodores offense was returner Kevin Newman (Arizona). The renown shortstop continuously led the Cape League in batting average, ending his season with a .380 average. Despite entering his second year after winning the Thurman Munson batting title as a freshman in the 2013 season, Newman claimed he was in no way trying to top his performance. However, his consistency certainly carried over to the new squad, as the rising junior made 51 hits in 145 at-bats. Newman hit his first home run of the Cape League on June 15, 2014, against Orleans, and recorded seven doubles this summer. He was named the 2014 Cape League MVP. The recipient of the Thurman Munson award in the 2014 season, Newman became the first player in Cape League history to win the award twice, having previously been the youngest recipient.

“I’m very honored, [and] it’s a great award to have,” said Newman as his teammates drenched him in ice water, “I’ve got great teammates [and] great hitters in our lineup who really set the table for me. [Coach Trundy] does a great job with us, and let’s us really play our own game.”

In terms of outstanding offensive plays, one home run comes to mind when considering the Falmouth Commodores’ season. The homer came against the Harwich Mariners in the top of the seventh, the Commodores down 3-1 with two outs in the inning. A walk and back-to-back singles loaded the bases for Falmouth as designated hitter Shaun Chase (Oregon) approached the plate. Chase worked towards a full count, hoping to make a simple play that brought in a run for Falmouth. However, his play was far from simple as Chase drilled a grand slam over the center fence, giving the Commodores a 5-3 lead and win.

“I just had to change my mindset and put the [poor] at-bats behind me,” said Chase of his grand slam, “I was just trying to get a base hit and score a couple of runs to get the lead back. [Pitcher Scott Tully] just grooved me a pitch and I just put a good swing on it.”

The Commodores are sure to remember their 2014 season for years to come, but they will more likely remember the time they spent with one another as teammates. While the team did not achieve the final outcome they worked towards, the players were privileged to spend as many nights with the team as possible towards the end of the playoff run.

“I was completely impressed with the fight in our guys,” commented Head Coach Jeff Trundy after the final championship game, “we did a lot of good things in that baseball game. They really cared about each other. They played the game for one another, they wanted this thing for each other, [and] I have tremendous respect for them.”

Perhaps the one person who will miss this year’s Commodores squad the most is their leader, Coach Trundy, for whom the players were determined to bring home the Arnold Mycock trophy.

“They made my day a joy,” Trundy said with a smile, “to be honest, I hate the playoffs...because I know the end of the year is coming and it means I’m not going to be able to spend time with these guys. They literally grew to love each other, and they formed friendships that are going to last a lifetime. These guys are never going to forget Falmouth.”