

For the second year in a row and the just second time in program history, the Belmont Bruins' baseball team has earned a berth in the NCAA Regional Championships at Alex Box Stadium in Baton Rouge, LA.

Lebanon High graduate and Belmont relief ace Garrett Fanchier has been a big part of the Bruins' success this season.

"It was really exciting last year, being the first team to make it to the tournament," Fanchier said. "It's been exciting to make there again this year."

The Bruins sport a record of 39-22 and are coming off a second consecutive Atlantic Sun Conference Championship.

Belmont takes on second-seed Oregon State today (Friday) at 2 p.m. at majestic Alex Box Stadium on the LSU campus in Baton Rouge, LA. Fanchier often finds himself working as a relief pitcher, a position that can put him in high pressure situations. However, each game presents a different challenge.

"I don't know what role I'll need to play on the day, so I just need to be prepared to go on when my name is called," Fanchier said.

Currently, the senior righthander holds Belmont's record for the most appearances by a pitcher, and his 11 saves ties him for fourth most in a single season at Belmont.

Although it would be easy to claim that he has changed since his time as a Blue Devil, Fanchier claims that he does not think his style has changed much. Instead, any changes to his pitching style have come from practice.

“I’ve learned a lot about the game just from playing it every day,” Fanchier said. However, he does feel that he has matured mentally since his high school days.

“I definitely think I’ve improved from a mental standpoint on the mound and off the field. We have a great coaching staff that really help you to grow on and off the field.”

While he does have some interests outside of baseball, the game has been his priority. “I like to hunt and fish and play video games like everyone else, but baseball is number one and has been for a long time,” Fanchier said.

Fanchier recently graduated from Belmont with a degree in business administration. Although he has no specific plans for the future, he does plan on applying for jobs when the baseball season is over so that he can begin his career.

Last year, the team faced Vanderbilt in the NCAA tournament, a team they also played during the regular season. However, this season they will be facing three teams never played before in the program’s history. Fanchier did not express any concern, however.

“At this level, everyone is a high caliber team, so it’s important to just be prepared.”

Host LSU and UL-Monroe are the other two teams in the double-elimination tournament.

TV COVERAGE -- All Baton Rouge Regional games (up to seven, if necessary) will be carried live on Comcast Sports Southeast (CSS). Fans can also listen on the Bruin Sports Network (online and mobile).

By HALEY SEGER, The Wilson POST