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Infielder Camden Mitchell follows the path of the ball after connecting with his bat in a February contest against TCS Post Grad Academy

Southpaw Mason Reynolds loads up to fire the ball across the plate in a game against TCS Post Grad Academy

Baseball off to slow start, optimism remains

By Adam Roseberry
Staff Writer

The Northeast Texas Community College baseball team is back on the diamond. After starting strong with a 5-1 record to begin the season, the Eagles have fallen in 15 of their last 23 contests to stand three games under .500 overall.

It's been a slow start to NJCAA Region XIV North conference play for the Eagles as they currently hold a 4-10 record against conference opponents with a little less than two thirds of the conference schedule left to play.

NTCC head baseball coach Andy Morgan believes that hard work will get his team right back into contention for a spot in the regional playoffs.

"We've just gotta keep working, just keep working hard. We're doing what we're supposed to be doing. The ball hasn't rolled our way the last couple weeks," Morgan said. "We've lost some close ones, we've lost some not close ones but the guys are still competing and

getting after it, still got a great attitude."

Despite a team batting average just over .250, the Eagles are averaging a little over six runs per game. Utility infielder/right handed pitcher Seth Cox, an NJCAA all-conference selection a year ago, leads the teams in home runs with six and RBI's with 22. Cox is also one of three Eagles starters with a batting average over .300 along with infielder Carson Lorch and outfielder Bryce Johnson.

"Seth does a great job, hits right in the middle of the order for us," Morgan said. "He's a sophomore, and he's just done a great job of just competing and doing what the team needs him to do whenever the situation happens."

On the defensive side of the ball sophomore right handed pitcher Blake Van Cleeve leads the team in strikeouts (26) while also posting an 3.42 ERA over 20 innings of work. Fellow righty Austin Burda leads the Eagles in innings pitched with 25 with a 4.50 ERA while southpaw

Matthew Howell holds the best ERA on the team, currently holding a 3.15 average across 20 innings of work.

While it's been difficult for the Eagles to push runners across the plate as of late, Coach Morgan is optimistic about the opportunities NTCC has been creating.

"Overall, team wise, our team on base percentage is really good. We've been getting on base," Morgan said. "We need to do a little bit better job about scoring more runs whenever we're on base."

While the Eagles have started conference play poorly, there's plenty of time to turn it around.

"We're a third of the way through our conference season. We've played everybody one time, one series. This Saturday we're starting our second time through," Morgan said. "We just need to keep competing, we need to keep throwing strikes and getting after it, we need to score runs whenever it's time to score runs."

Consistency will be the key if the Eagles are to flip



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Pitcher Kevin Schoneboom hurls a pitch towards home in a recent game against Bossier Parish.

the script of the season to this point.

"We've played good defense, we've pitched really well, we just need to continue to follow the plan and keep doing what we're doing," Morgan said. "[If we] kind of flip [our conference record] this second time through and we're right back in the hunt."

The Eagles found some success during spring break, going 3-2 for the week including 1-1 in conference play with a win over Tyler Junior College. While the wins may not move the needle much overall for NTCC, it provides some much needed positive momentum as the team continues conference

play in the coming weeks.

The Eagles will round out the month of March with doubleheaders against conference opponents Panola and Navarro as they attempt to right the ship.

For more information on NTCC baseball, visit the official website of NTCC Athletics at ntcc eagles.com.

Column

The importance of having AEDs at athletic events



By Adam Roseberry
Staff Writer

On an average Monday night in early January the NFL's Cincinnati Bengals and Buffalo Bills met in a regular season contest. Both teams were near the top of the American Conference, the game would be a battle for postseason seeding.

At about the six-minute mark in the first quarter, something happened that shocked all of America, rendering the game unimportant. Bills safety Damar Hamlin wobbled and collapsed after a collision with Bengals WR Tee Higgins, lying still on the ground as trainers rushed to surround him. The typical hush for an injury stoppage fell over the crowd, but as time dragged on with no movement from the stricken Hamlin it became clear that this was not a typical injury.

Hamlin had suffered a sudden cardiac arrest, and his life was on the line. Buffalo training staff applied CPR and shocked the young man several times with an Automated External Defibrillator over a 10-minute period, eventually resuscitating Hamlin, saving his life and avoiding tragedy.

Damar Hamlin is one of the lucky ones. The American College of Cardiology estimates that 100-150 athletes die of sudden cardiac arrests every year while playing their respective sports. While it is far from a common occurrence, 100-150 healthy young athletes dying each year is a horrible tragedy that cannot be overlooked, especially when their deaths might have been prevented.

Enter the AED. "An AED, or automated external defibrillator, is used to help those experiencing sudden cardiac arrest," reads the Red Cross website. "It's a medical device that can analyze the heart's rhythm and, if necessary,

deliver an electrical shock, or defibrillation, to help the heart re-establish an effective rhythm."

Used together with CPR, defibrillation can essentially restart the afflicted person's heart, saving their life.

"Currently, the only way to restore a regular heart rhythm during cardiac arrest is to use an AED," the Red Cross continues.

Only 20 states (plus the district of Columbia) require the presence of AEDs on high school campuses while California requires AEDs to be present at sporting events. Although 21 states have seen the importance of AEDs in the interest of the health of the public, a troubling number of states do not have legislation in place to ensure the protection of their athletes.

The most important thing to do when a person collapses due to sudden cardiac arrest is to begin CPR and shock them as quickly as possible.

"With each minute delay in defibrillation from the onset of cardiac arrest, the probability of survival decreases by 10%," a Pubmed study reads. "Early defibrillation (within 8 minutes of a cardiac arrest) has been shown to improve survival outcomes."

To put that in simpler terms, "Statistically, if someone is shocked within one minute of suffering a sudden cardiac arrest, they have a 90% chance of survival," says Defibtech.com. "Each minute after decreases their chances of survival 10%."

Time is everything when an athlete collapses. That is why

AEDs must be available at all sporting events, and people must be trained in using them.

While recent events have forced the microscope of the public eye onto cardiac arrests in apparently healthy young athletes, this is far from a new issue.

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"Hank Gathers is the reason AEDs should be present at all sporting events...You never know when an apparently healthy young athlete's life may suddenly be in jeopardy."

"Sudden cardiac arrest in athletes is unfortunately not a new phenomenon," wrote pediatric cardiologist Shaun Mohan in the Courier Journal. "It is the leading cause of death in young athletes and up to two-thirds of SCA deaths occur without any prior knowledge/indications of heart disease."

In 1990, Loyola Marymount star forward Hank Gathers slammed home a dunk to put his Lions up by 12 in the West Coast Conference basketball tournament semifinals.

Running back down the floor to play defense, Gathers fell to the floor. He tried to get up, but collapsed. His breathing stopped shortly after. Back then sporting events didn't

have AEDs or people trained in the usage of them on site. Gathers died on the court, later diagnosed with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy. He was 23 years old.

Hank Gathers is one of many reasons why CPR training and AEDs should be at every sporting event.

You never know when an apparently healthy young athlete's life may suddenly be in jeopardy. It can happen suddenly and unexpectedly. And it can happen. We can always hope for the best- but it is essential to prepare for the worst.