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Dawgs MVP plans to return next season

Baseball: Okotoks college team hold annual banquet on Saturday

Wednesday, Jan 24, 2018 06:00 am **By: Bruce Campbell**

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Okotoks Dawgs Rookie of the Year Matt Lloyd and MVP Kody Funderburk celebrate a home run at Seaman Stadium in July. The Dawgs are holding their annual awards and banquet Jan. 27 at the Foothills Centennial Centre.
Wheel file photo

Okotoks Dawgs fans will be Funderstruck once again this summer — that is if talent doesn't get in the way.

The Okotoks Dawgs 2017 MVP Kody Funderburk plans to play for the Okotoks Dawgs again this summer, but there may be 30 people who are thinking otherwise.



One of the 30 major league baseball general managers might draft him.

“I haven't signed a contract with the Dawgs yet, but I have told the coaches that I will return,” Funderburk said from Dallas Baptist University. “Depending on the draft and what happens there... I was glad I got to Okotoks and experience a summer with the Dawgs. It's like nothing else to get up there and play in front of the big crowds.”

Funderburk will be the recipient of the Dawgs MVP award at the team's annual banquet on Jan. 27 at the Foothills Centennial Centre.

He had a season to remember.

The 6-foot-4 225-pound Funderburk, the WMBL MVP, slugged a Western Major Baseball League high 15 home runs to go along with his 55 RBI and .339 batting average. He also pitched nine shutout innings during the regular season.

“I wanted to go up there and fine tune my swing,” Funderburk said of his season in Okotoks. “My goal was just to stay more confident at the plate and maybe do some pitching.”



He credits former Dawgs coach Tyler Graham making some adjustments to his swing for his big summer.

“It was more big-league style – how you should turn the barrel around your back shoulder to get more on plane with the ball,” he said.

There was one-major downer to the season.

After the Dawgs finished with the best record in the league, they were eliminated in the first round of the playoffs by the Edmonton Prospects for the second-straight year — Funderburk had played for the Capital City when they did the trick in 2016.

“It was a disappointment, but there are a bunch of good guys on that team and they just beat us,” Funderburk said.

He won't be in attendance at Saturday's banquet as he is preparing for the Dallas Baptist Patriots upcoming season.

“It's going really good — I'm enjoying it,” Funderburk said. “I'm pitching and playing first. My fall season went really well. We will see how the spring goes and how much I get to play.”

The other award recipients are Tyler Burdett, Pitcher of the Year; Matt Lloyd, Rookie of the Year and Eddie Sanchez, True Grit Award winner. Both Lloyd and Sanchez are graduates of the Dawgs Academy.

The Dawgs will also induct two more people into its Hall of Fame.

One of them is Dave Robb, who has been a mainstay with the organization. He's been the Okotoks Dawgs head coach, bench coach and has always helped with young academy players.

He is a coach at Mesa Community College, where he helped a young man named Funderburk.

"Dave has meant a lot to me, I spent two years working with him," Funderburk said. "I am very appreciative for all Dave has done for me."

The other 2018 hall of fame inductee is Greg Hamilton, a coach and builder of Canada's national junior baseball team, which has included many Dawgs players.

The guest speaker will be Calgary Stampeders Bo Levi Mitchell, the most outstanding player in the CFL in 2016. Mitchell showed he knows a bit about baseball as he crushed the ball at the Field of Dreams charity softball game at Seaman Stadium in the spring.

Just like the Dawgs, he also knows a thing or two about hardships in sports. The Stamps had the best record in the CFL the past two years only to suffer two heart-breaking losses in the Grey Cup.

For ticket information to the banquet go to dawgsbaseall.ca or call 403-262-DAWG.




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