



Taylor Bratton

## Former Player Taylor Bratton 2017 Copperheads Head Coach

Taylor Bratton, who played for the Asheboro Copperheads for two seasons and was part of the team that set the franchise record for wins, has been named head coach for the 2017 season.

The 25-year old Bratton, who played at the University of West Alabama and is now on the staff at Georgia Southwestern University in Americus, GA, replaces Winston-Salem State's Keith Ritsche. Ritsche, who spent three seasons as head coach and reached the post-season the past two years, has opted not to return for a fourth summer.

Bratton, a native of Oakville, Ontario, spent this past summer as head coach of the Medicine Hat Mavericks in the Western Major Baseball League, the top collegiate summer league in Canada. A left-handed pitcher who played for the Copperheads in 2012-13, Bratton pitched in 22 games over two seasons, mostly out of the bullpen. The 2013 team went a franchise best 35-18 and Bratton posted a 2.88 ERA in 34 1/3 innings with two wins. He recorded 36 strikeouts and walked only six batters.

Bratton coached Medicine Hat to a 35-20 record this past summer and took the team to the second round of the league playoffs before being eliminated. He was named the pitching coach at Georgia Southwestern in August after spending one year as a graduate assistant at West Alabama, where he earned an undergraduate degree in Sports Management and a Masters in Physical Education.

"We are very excited to being able to bring Taylor back to Asheboro as head coach of the Copperheads," said General Manager David Camp. "Keith did an excellent job for us and we had hoped that he would continue, but because of family-related obligations he felt he needed to move on and we certainly respect his decision."

“I want to thank the Pugh family (team owners Ronnie, Doug, Steve and Mike Pugh) and David Camp for this opportunity to return to Asheboro,” said Bratton. “I had a great experience there for two summers as a player and have always wanted to find time to come back. Asheboro is the place I formed some lifelong friendships and I’m very excited to be able to return. Hopefully, we can add to the excitement at McCrary Park, continue the winning tradition and extend it into the playoffs.”

“We think Taylor is a perfect fit for the Asheboro Copperheads,” Camp added. “He made a lot of friends here, knows the community and has a familiarity with the Coastal Plain League. He did a terrific job this past summer as a head coach in Medicine Hat and we believe he possesses all the qualities necessary to be successful in Asheboro as well. He is a real student of the game and his coaching style and philosophy are exactly what we were looking for. He handles himself in a very professional manner and he’s a young man of high integrity. That has always been very important to us.”

Bratton, who becomes the first former Copperhead player to return as a coach, came to Asheboro in 2012 after having played the previous summer for the Thunder Bay Border Cats of the Northwoods League. He served as team captain at West Alabama during his senior season and after his collegiate career ended he pitched professionally in the independent American Association for the Winnipeg Goldeyes before deciding to go into coaching.

The Copperheads raced off to a 19-6 start this summer and easily won the first half title in the West Division to qualify for the post-season. However, some key player departures and injuries proved costly in July and they couldn’t sustain their winning ways in the second half. They wound up finishing 28-26 for the season, losing to eventual league champion Savannah in the first round of the Petitt Cup playoffs.

Ritsche directed the Copperheads to a 34-win season and the second half West title in 2015.

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