

Eastern Oklahoma State College head coach takes OU position

(Press Release 07-13-11)

After seven seasons at the helm of the Eastern Oklahoma State College Mountaineer baseball team, Head Coach Aric Thomas will be returning to Norman when he joins the coaching staff at the University of Oklahoma. The university announced July 9 that Thomas, who spent 11 seasons as a Sooner player and coach, will take over as the OU hitting coach.

“I love Eastern very much,” Thomas said about his time at the school. “It has been a special place for our family and we have enjoyed our time here very much. I believe the baseball program has grown into one of the best in the country.”

Thomas, who also served as Athletic Director for the past four years, led the 2011 Mountaineer team to its second consecutive Region II Championship - a first for the Eastern baseball program. In 2011 he was also named as the Region II Coach of the Year. During Thomas' time as head coach, the Mountaineers had a 237-159-1 overall record (.598). Eastern has been nationally ranked in six of the seven years that Thomas was at Eastern, including five Top-15 rankings.

According to Thomas, the Eastern baseball program has become nationally known as one of the best in moving student-athletes on to the next level. Thomas adds that in those seven years, 70 student-athletes have moved on to the professional and four-year school levels. Of those student-athletes, seven players have been drafted and 38 have moved on to the Division I level.

“We are excited for him and appreciate all he has done to build a nationally-ranked program,” Eastern President Dr. Stephen Smith said. “During his tenure at Eastern Oklahoma State College, Coach Thomas has represented the institution and baseball program in a first-class, professional manner. His concern for his players was more than teaching them the game of baseball, but also stressing to them the importance of getting their education and becoming quality young men.

“He was successful as a player and coach at the University of Oklahoma and will continue that success with them once again. We wish him and his family all the best.”

Thomas played his junior and senior seasons for OU. While there, he was an integral part of the Sooners' 1994 National Championship and 1995 College World Series teams, hitting .336 with 61 stolen bases and 113 runs scored. He was selected First Team All-Big Eight, All-Midwest Region and NCAA All-Midwest Regional Team his senior season. He still ranks 4th in OU's single-season stolen base record book with 38 steals. Thomas also ranks 6th in career stolen bases with 61, despite only playing two seasons for the Sooners.

Thomas spent his first eight years coaching as an assistant at OU. After spending one year as coordinator of baseball operations, he accepted the head coaching position at Eastern. Thomas has also coached in two prestigious summer leagues: Cape Cod League and Alaska Baseball League. In 2004, Thomas was unanimously named Alaska Baseball League coach of the Year with the Peninsula Oilers.

Thomas and his wife, Julie, have been married for 11 years and have two children Chloe Elizabeth (8) and Brett Nathan (4).

“I would like to thank all of the coaches and players for their dedication and efforts in building the program to that level,” Thomas says. “We’ve had incredible support from administration, staff, faculty and the surrounding community and I am very thankful for that. I hope the program continues to grow and I look forward to returning to Eastern to recruit players.”