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FGCU's hockey team gets in a practice session to prepare for the upcoming season. PHOTO BY AMANDA WATKINS



SOUTH LEE MESSENGER

The FGCU hockey team is preparing for their fifth year of play, with the season beginning on Friday, Oct. 6.

The team will play the Central Michigan Chippewas at Mount Pleasant, Mich. and the first home game of the season follows two weeks after on Oct. 20, when the Eagles play Life University from Georgia.

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Expecting a large turnout

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"We had around 600 fans at last year's home opener, and we've had up to 1,000 fans at our home games before," said Matthew Maida, team president and forward.

The team said they are looking forward to playing in front of their fans again this year, especially since the club has only lost one game at home in the past two seasons.

Plans for this season

"We're definitely looking to our returning players to step up their game this season," said Maida.

Winning the national championship is at the top of the list of the team's expectations this season. The club came close last season and the memory of last year's loss is still fresh in the team's mind.

"We were on a high last season, but we came away disappointed because we didn't win the national championship," said forward Brett Galbraith.

Another issue this season is tightening up the team's defense. "We need to place a strong emphasis on defense this year," said head coach Steve Jensen.

"Last year we lacked some discipline, too many players took penalties and we need to work on that."

Jensen also said he wants the team to work on passing and transitioning with the puck at high speeds.

Jensen said one way he is working on disciplining the team is by putting the men through a rigorous off-ice fitness routine which consists of weights and sprinting.

Off ice training

"The off the ice training program will help bond us together as a team," Jensen said.

Both Jensen and the players are looking forward to playing some of the bigger schools during this season and Jensen is confident that his group of men are among some of the best.

Jensen said he feels the hockey team has some of the best goalies in the division and he can't wait for them to get out on the ice this season.

"I'm really proud of our team's goal tending. I think we have some of the best goalies in all of division II," Jensen said. "I'm sure there's going to be nights this season when we'll ride out on their shoulders."

More info

For more information on the FGCU hockey team, you can their Web site at

<http://hockey.fgcu.edu>

The logo for South Lee Messenger, featuring the words "South Lee" in a smaller font above the word "Messenger" in a larger, bold font. The logo is centered between two thick black horizontal bars.

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