

Falmouth Commodores 2016 Recap

By Brandon Ball

After a summer of turmoil *in 2015*, Falmouth's beloved baseball team was looking forward to a new season, this time hoping that the outcome would be better than the previous summer's abysmal end. The Commodores entered the 2016 Summer Season with a fresh crop of new, smiling and determined faces both on and off the field, who were ready to play baseball.

The Commodores started off the season playing .500 baseball. Throughout their first 20 games, they went 10-10 and sat in the middle of the pack of the Cape Cod Baseball League. But things took a turn, and after those 20 games, reinforcements began to arrive fresh from the College World Series. One of those players was 2015 Cape Cod League All-Star 1B/RF JJ Matijevic (U of Arizona) who ended the 2015 season with the Commodores hitting .333.

As more players began to come in, the Commodores began to win. Going 19-5 to finish off their summer which landed them to the best record on the Cape, thus winning them the President's Cup. This was thanks, in large part, to their depth at many positions and their 7 Cape League All-Stars which included the Cape's best pitcher, Jeffrey Passantino and his two teammates from Lipscomb University, CF Michael Gigliotti and RHP Brady Puckett. Gigliotti finished the season as one of the league's best all-around players, and the league noticed, handing him the Cape League's Prospect of the Year Award. The other four All-Stars included INF Tristan Gray (Rice U), OF Trevor Larnach (Oregon St. U), DH Tyler Lawrence (Murray St.), and RHP Brendan King (Holy Cross).

The Commodores' offense was a powerhouse in the second half of the season, powered by sluggers Tyler Lawrence and JJ Matijevic, hit machines Michael Gigliotti and Tristan Gray, and consistent production from the bottom of the line-up, the Commodores put up the 2nd most runs on the Cape with 207. Alongside their production at the plate was the team's ability to get productive and consistent pitching. With their starters being lights out and their bullpen shutting the door during the back-half of the game, the staff was nearly unhittable.

That production was mirrored by the coaching staff, which is always elite when it comes to the Commodores. With assistants like Mike Landry and Brad Stoll backing up 19-year vet, Jeff Trundy, the team was smoothly firing on all cylinders. The interns and fans began to catch on to this enthusiasm surrounding the team, as they all adopted the mantra “Win It For Trundy”.

The Commodores players and interns collaborated to get behind the veteran coach who has had the Cape League Championship taken from him on a couple of accounts in almost two decades as the team’s head coach. Once the Commodores clinched a playoff spot, the mantra became a rallying cry. Shirts were made, hashtags were tweeted, everywhere you looked in Falmouth you could see or hear “Win It For Trundy”.

So the stage was set. The regular season was over and the Commodores were heading into August as the #1 seed in the entire league. They triumphed and used their home-field advantage to sweep the Hyannis Harbor Hawks out of the Western Division Semifinals, outscoring them 14-2 over two games. Stud performances from pitchers Jeff Passantino and Brady Singer, to go along with the offensive explosion, sent the Commodores to the Western Finals for the first time since 2014. Their opponent that round was a team that walked off with the win against them on the final day of the regular season, the red-hot Bourne Braves.

Bourne had just won their first-round match-up against the Wareham Gatemen in one of the most dramatic games of the season. Being down 7-2 entering the bottom of the ninth inning in Game 3, the Braves rallied to score 6 runs to walk-off and end the Gatemen’s season. With Falmouth riding their season-long hot streak, this series was poised to be a classic. ~~And~~ Bourne wasted no time in showing the Commodores that it’s no easy road to the finals, shocking the Commodores by beating them 7-4 at Guv Fuller Field to take a 1-0 series lead and putting Falmouth’s season in jeopardy. But, they wouldn’t go down without a fight.

The Commodores came from behind and beat the Braves 5-4 in game 2 in Bourne to tie the series. They would head home to beat the Braves again at Guv Fuller Field, clinching a spot in the Cape League Finals against the defending champs, the Y-D Red Sox, who won their first of their two consecutive titles against Jeff Trundy and the Commodores in 2014.

Falmouth overcame their first obstacle, beating Y-D at the Guv, 5-4, taking a 1-0 series lead. Jeff Passantino threw over 100 pitches on his way to the win, solidifying his place as THE top-dog on the Cape. But, on a hot Yarmouth summer day, the Commodores couldn't get their bats going, losing 9-4, making it winner-take-all at the Guv in Game 3.

The Falmouth faithful came out in droves to witness the final game of the 2016 summer. Unfortunately, they would leave empty-handed. As the pitching let up 3 runs in the first two innings, the Commodores' offense was stifled. They were held to two hits all game, and would be shutout by stellar pitching from Western Carolina's Bryan Sammons, as the Y-D Red Sox captured their 3rd title in as many seasons.

Though the 2016 summer season didn't end the way we all hoped, the Commodores were one of the most exciting teams to watch during the season. From the characters on and off the field surrounding the team, it was a very enjoyable summer to be a resident of Falmouth. And though they didn't "Win It For Trundy", the team fought until the very last day to get their beloved coach a championship. It was not the first time and it will not be the last time that a Jeff Trundy-led Falmouth Commodore team will be in a position to win it all. The summer of 2016 will be one to remember.