

Breeden hires Montalvo to round out coaching staff

Former Alabama standout was Player of the Year candidate in 2009

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. -

Jeff Breeden has announced the final hiring for his 2013 softball staff, naming Kelley Montalvo as the outfielder's and hitting coach. Montalvo, a native of Miami, Fla., played collegiate softball at the University of Alabama and professional ball with the Akron Racers of the National Pro Fastpitch League (NPFL).

"I met Kelley through the interview process, and was impressed immediately," Breeden said. "I was impressed with her resume, with her Alabama connections and the fact that she played in the women's professional league."



"Everyone I talked to said that, on a scale of one to 10, Kelley was a 10 and that I should hire her immediately."

Montalvo will inherit a squad that batted .272 as a team last season, compared to their opponent's average of .321.

"I looked at last year's program, and knew that it needed rebuilding," Montalvo said. "I did my research on (MT), and knew that this atmosphere was right where I wanted to be. I didn't want to come into a program that was good and thought that they didn't need to improve every day. I wanted a program that I knew needed improvement and would put the work in."

Junior Kayla Toney returns to the field after leading the team in batting average (.410), but several other 2012 leaders are gone, most notably Kaycee Popham (50 hits, 10 home runs, 27 RBI), Kelsey Woodruff (.328 average, nine doubles, 44 hits) and Natalie Ysais (25 RBI, 38 hits, 16 walks).

"She's going to bring a high intensity and an urgency of getting things done to this team," Breeden said.

Montalvo's enthusiasm for the job, backed by her expertise at the plate, should provide a jumpstart to a team that had just 105 extra base hits (56 doubles, eight triples and 41 home runs) in 1,281 at-bats.

"I'm a very, very strong believer that if you're giving 100 percent as a coach, the girls will give it right back," Montalvo said. "I'm going to come there and give 110 percent every day, whatever it takes, and I know that the girls will respond."

As a senior at Alabama, Montalvo started 64 games and hit .316 with six home runs and 37 RBI. She also was 10th in the nation with 52 walks (an Alabama single-season record) while striking out only 16 times in 155 at-bats.

In her junior season, Montalvo made just three errors in 175 chances at third base while hitting .373 with 46 runs scored, 54 RBI, 10 home runs and 15 doubles for a .663 slugging percentage.

Montalvo hit .346 and scored 45 runs in her sophomore season. She also drove in 43 runs while leading the team with 16 doubles. In 63 starts, Montalvo smashed a career-high 11 home runs as well.

As a freshman, Montalvo knocked five doubles and three home runs while driving in 20 for a .285 batting average.

"I love teaching the game," Montalvo said. "Lots of times, coaches want to make robots, not necessarily teach the players how to play. That is my goal. I'm going to bring positive energy, and I want to teach the players to love the game and to realize how much of a blessing it is to wear the jersey."

In her career at Alabama, Montalvo was awarded the following: All-SEC freshman honors (2006), NFCA All-South Region first team (2007), All-South Region second team (2008), first team All-SEC (2008 and 2009), SEC All-Defensive team (2008 and 2009), Easton All-American first team (2008), Louisville Slugger/NFCA All-American first team (2008), NFCA All-District team (2009), All-SEC preseason selection (2009) and Women's College World Series All-Tournament Team (2009). She was also a USA Softball Player of the Year candidate in 2009.

"I talked with Patrick Murphy (head coach at Alabama), and he described Kelley as a 'spark plug,'" Breeden said. "She isn't very big in stature, but she makes up for it with her intensity and passion for the game."

Montalvo, who also appeared on MTV's "Made," will coach first base for the Blue Raiders on game day.

"My personal goal, or personal statement, is that I want to change the program," Montalvo said. "I want us to come in and get better every day. If it's doing a community service project, we're getting better. If it's us bringing more fans into the stadium, that in itself is improvement."

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