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Hines: Individual goals are key

Continued from Page 5

Hines' off-season at home did as much to rehabilitate him physically as it did mentally.

"I was homesick after my first two seasons here," Hines said. "I missed my family and friends back home. The most important thing someone can do to get back [from injury] is to stay loose, stay in rhythm."

Hines' first test this year was in Macon, Ga., with another Atlanta Braves single A affiliate, the Macon Braves. By his own accord, Hines struggled to regain the form that had made him one of the Northwest League's toughest hitters a season ago.

For Hines, entering his third season of minor league baseball, the expectations were higher than ever before. Playing in Macon, only hours from where he grew up and played his high school and college ball, Hines found it difficult to focus on baseball.

"I had a slow start in Macon," Hines said. "The coaches thought it would be better for me to play away from home. I guess there were a lot of distractions playing in Georgia."

Distractions indeed. Hines lettered in basketball, baseball and football at Benjamin E. Mays High School outside Atlanta where he was first-team all-state at shortstop in high school.

From there he went on to play two seasons in the junior college ranks with Dekalb College in Atlanta. Hines was first drafted by the Los Angeles Dodgers after his freshman year with Dekalb, but decided not to sign with them and reentered the draft after his sophomore season.

In June 1995, Hines' boyhood dream of playing professional baseball was realized when the Atlanta Braves selected him in the 47th-round of the draft, a draft pick that brought him to Eugene.

"I like playing in Eugene," Hines said. "The atmos-

phere is real laid back, relaxed. It's not as fast paced as Georgia; it's something you need to get used to. It was nice to get back after that rough off-season, but I think the training I did last summer has prepared me better for this season."

Prepare him it did.

Through the first 11 games of the 1997 season, Hines led the Ems in home runs, RBIs, on-base percentage, slugging percentage and batting average. The quick start earned him the Black Angus "Player of the Week Award" as the Emeralds' top performer during the opening week.

An amazing feat on a team that dropped nine of those first 11 games and now sits in the Southern Division cellar with a 2-11 record.

Eugene's poor start means that Hines, one of the Ems' few veterans, must now lead in the dugout as well as the plate.

"We're a lot younger this year than we were last," Hines said. "I think a lot of guys are a little bit nervous when they step to the plate. I know I was in my first year. I try to just tell them to relax, block out the fans and the surroundings. Just go out there and hit."

As a veteran, Hines has learned that individual goals are the key to a successful season in baseball.

"I set my goals real high," Hines said. "It's hard to get close to guys on the team because you never know when someone is going to be gone the next day. I've learned to just take care of myself. That's the only way you're going to make it."

"Making it" to Hines means, of course, trying to make it to the big leagues. But if he does not, he plans to return to Georgia and finish his studies at Dekalb.

A mature decision for one of the Ems' few remaining veteran players.

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Frank: Idea ruins All-Star game

Continued from Page 5

sport that still held to its small number of playoff teams (4), which made the regular season mean something.

And what about the All-Star game?

The best part of the game was that John Kruk hasn't faced Randy Johnson before. Or that Greg Maddux will be facing Tino Martinez for the first time since last season's World Series.

Interleague play takes away what makes the All-Star game special.

Of course, there is also the World Series.

Interleague play almost takes the fun out of the unique matchups it brings.

We'll already know how Roberto Alomar fares

against Tom Glavine because we can just look back to the season stats.

But I tend to take a purist's look at these things.

More conventional thinking would say, "Who cares? Bring those matchups to the regular season; give the fans something a reason to come to the games in June, July and August."

Who knows, maybe the conventional thinking is right.

Then again, maybe Milli Vanilli will come back into style again too.

Ryan Frank is an associate editor for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the paper.

Emeralds: Eugene travels to Portland

Continued from Page 5

ple hits, going 2-for-4. Saul, protesting a call at first base, was thrown out of the game for the first time this season after an emotional argument.

Saturday proved to be more of the same as the Ems managed just four hits in the 7-0 loss. Ems' starting pitcher Ryan Schurman

walked six batters and gave up three runs in five innings of work.

On Sunday, the Ems' showed signs of improvement, but did not capitalize on their scoring opportunities.

Eugene collected eight hits and at one point led the game 1-0, but left nine runners on base and lost

the game 5-2.

Salem-Keizer's Brett Casper hit three-run home run in the sixth that broke a 1-1 tie and gave Salem-Keizer the lead for good.

The Ems now travel to Portland (8-4) for three games before returning to Eugene Thursday for a five-game homestand against Yakima (3-10).

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