



Emerald

Although the roster has yet to be named, manager Jeff Gardner and the Ems will play their first game June 18 at Civic Stadium.

## Ems give relief to sports fans

■ Paced by college star Khalil Greene, the Emeralds hope to start their season off with a bang

By Hank Hager  
Oregon Daily Emerald

While the Ducks are dormant during the summer, the bats and balls come out, and Eugene's Civic Stadium becomes the place to be if you're a sports fan.

The Eugene Emeralds, the short-season Class-A affiliate of the San Diego Padres, start play on June 18 against the Tri-City Dust Devils.

While the team has not yet announced its roster for the upcoming season, the Padres, by drafting a high number of collegiate players, will be giving those in Eugene something to cheer about — quality talent.

That talent is led by Clemson shortstop Khalil Greene. The 13th overall pick in the Major League Baseball First-Year Player Draft, Greene is still playing for the Tigers after the squad recently defeated Arkansas to earn a berth in the College World Series.

Nevertheless, the Atlantic Coast Conference Player of the Year is excited to have been drafted by the Padres, and potentially play for the Emeralds.

"It's an honor to be picked that high," Greene said. "I never anticipated this. Hopefully, this is the beginning of a productive career after Clemson."

The Emeralds may never see Greene, though, as San Diego General Manager Kevin Towers told the San Diego Union-Tribune that the phenom could start at a higher level, possibly with Class A Lake Elsinore

Storm of the California League.

Greene's teammate at Clemson, first baseman Michael Johnson, was taken in the second round (54th overall) by the Padres as well, possibly giving the Emeralds a distinctive ACC feel to their roster.

"It has always been a dream of mine, as it is for every baseball player, to play in the major leagues, and you have to get drafted first," he said. "I've worked hard to get to this point, and it is very exciting. It is neat that Khalil and I could possibly be on the same team."

Of their first 22 picks, the Emeralds chose 20 collegiate players, including Indiana outfielder Kennard Jones, an all Big Ten Conference player in his junior season. The Beltsville, Md., native is expected to forgo his senior season and sign with the Padres.

Of those 20 collegiate selections, 12 were seniors in 2002, meaning they do not have the option of returning to school. The other eight were juniors and have the option of returning. The Padres must sign these players before they attend a class at their respective universities or the team will lose that player's rights.

"Some players may realize they're not ready to sign a pro contract yet and want to wait," Padres scouting director Bill Gayton told mlb.com.

In 2001, the Emeralds finished 32-44, last in the West Division of the Northwest League.

Greg Sain led the league with 16 home runs, while Marcus Nettles was tops in stolen bases with 35. However, it was the team's pitching that would eventually doom them to the cellar.

The squad finished sixth in the

### About the Emeralds

#### First game at Civic Stadium

Tuesday, June 18, 7:05 p.m. vs. Tri-City Dust Devils

#### Individual game ticket prices

Box seat (adult): \$7  
Box seat (child/senior): \$6  
General admission (adult): \$4.50  
General admission (child/senior): \$3.50

#### Manager

Jeff Gardner (2nd season)  
32-44 overall

#### Coaches

Jake Molina (hitting instructor)  
Urbano Lugo (pitching coach)

eight-team league in earned run average at 4.22 runs per game allowed and failed to place a single player in the top five in any major pitching categories.

That should not be the case this season as the Padres selected four pitchers with their first 10 picks of the draft.

Although the team does not know who will wear the Emeralds uniform on the field this season, they do know who will be leading them in the dugout. Jeff Gardner returns as manager after leading the squad in 2001, despite having the second-worst record in the league last season.

"We enjoyed Eugene," Gardner said about his tenure so far with the Emeralds. "I am not disappointed about going back. Professionally, I would have liked to move up, but I am in a no-lose situation."

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