

sports

PSH hopes to shine on the diamond

By **LOGAN ZUGAY**
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Spring is finally upon us here at Penn State Harrisburg. The grass is getting greener, soon the trees will blossom, and baseball season has arrived. For the Penn State Harrisburg Lions' baseball squad, it's a season of hope and anticipation. In a year when the second World Baseball Classic only further fuels the baseball fire.

With Nearly the entire roster returning, including the majority of the solid pitching staff, the experienced team has its eyes set on the big prize. "We want to take it all. We want to be conference champs," sophomore infielder Nick Knull said. "Our guys are working hard everyday and we have a positive mentality."

The PSH Lions are a provisional division III team, which means that they are not eligible for any post-season play beyond their conference tournament even if they come in first place. The conference championship is the equivalent to the World Series for these guys.

As much as the veterans returning are important, the newcomers are the ones that are being counted on to make an impact. With some key offensive losses they will be relied on to pick up the production.

"We know we are the rookies, but they don't treat us like that," freshman pitcher and first baseman Dan Vignola stated. "I think I speak for everyone when I say we were welcomed into the environment."

With conference powerhouse Keystone College leaving to explore other leagues, the Lions are considered one of the top teams in the NEAC. Last year's regular season champion, Caszanovia, is back with a solid team assembled, looking to repeat as host for the NEAC post-season tournament.

Now for a more in depth look at the PSH Lions:

KEY LOSSES:

1B Sean Frailey, .346, 4 HR, 40 RBI, 22 runs scored
OF Derron Pellman, .351, 11 RBI, 10 SB, 28 runs scored

KEY RETURNERS:

3B Garrett Piper, .343, 6 HR, 31

RBI, 20 runs scored

P/OF Barry Weistling, .341, 10 runs scored, 42.2 IP, 30 K

C Matt Umberger, .283, 4 HR, 18 RBI, 13 runs scored

P/OF Austin Kulp, .296, 2 HR, 14 RBI, 30 runs scored 17.1 IP

P Chris Finch, 35 IP, 30 K

SS Bret Harmony, .293, 14 RBI, 5 SB

NEWCOMERS:

OF TJ Houseal, Fr. Donegal

C/IF Drew Somma, Fr. Carlisle

IF/OF Tom Klemick, Jr. Central Dauphin

1B/OF Corey Latsha, Soph. Cedar Cliff

3B Chris Mest, Jr. Emmaus

P Johnathan Ventura, Fr. Herbert J Lehman

P Wills King, Soph. Camdem Hills

1B/P Dan Vignola, Fr. West Islip

P Corey Marshall, Sr. Cedar Cliff

Logan Zugay is a member of the PSH baseball team.



Photo courtesy of Penn State Harrisburg Athletic Department Web site

Wilson uses long spring to change swing

By **ALAN ROBINSON**
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Like the team he plays for, Pirates shortstop Jack Wilson believes it's time to stop being a follower and start being a leader.

Wilson, now the clubhouse leader in seniority with eight seasons in Pittsburgh, is more conscious of helping to show the way on a rebuilding team he believes is showing signs of coming out of a slump that began in the 1990s.

"I've always been hesitant on that leadership role," said Wilson, the only Pirates player to have been in their lineup every season since they moved into PNC Park in 2001. "I've always felt there's been someone in the clubhouse that has more time than myself, and it's not really my job. This is the first year I've been the senior

guy. It definitely puts a change in you and your heart and how you want to lead."

To prove that, Wilson is becoming an example for the Pirates' ever-growing cast of younger players by following hitting coach Don Long's suggestion to revamp the hands-at-head-level swing the 31-year-old Wilson has relied upon for a quarter-century.

"It's really hard; it's been really tough for me," Wilson said. "I can show you films of me at age 6 and my hands are high. My son (6-year-old Jacob) holds his hands high."

Wilson decided to cast off the only swing he's known after he couldn't hit for power a year ago following a calf injury that sidelined him for nearly two months. He ended the season with only one homer in 305 at-bats, down from the 12 he hit in

477 at-bats in 2007.

Something was wrong, and Wilson realized he needed to fix it. Instead of a tuneup, he went for an overhaul by adopting a swing that begins with his hands much lower than before.

Most major league hitters are reluctant to make such a drastic change, especially during what might be a contract season. Wilson is making \$7.25 million in the final season of a three-year contract, although the Pirates have a club option of \$8.4 million for 2010.

"It's like a pitcher who throws overhand going to submarine," Wilson said. "Probably no one knew it since we got here, but me and Donnie Long completely changed my stroke, completely changed my mechanics. ... It's the most foreign thing in the world when you've always been

a hands-high hitter."

Long encouraged the change because he believes that lowering his hands will allow Wilson to keep his bat in the hitting zone longer than before.

"If we hadn't had the World Baseball Classic and the longer spring, we might not have done it," Wilson said. "So far it's not getting ahead of myself, but we'll keep working and see how consistent we can be."

Wilson agreed to make the change with the one caveat that, if he was convinced it wasn't working, he could go back to his familiar swing. He didn't even while going 0-for-23 during a slump that ended Saturday, and he had a pair of doubles Monday during a 4-1 victory over Tampa Bay.

"Obviously, I didn't really like

it that much at first — you've got to change your whole swing," Wilson said. "But, watching films from past years of my bat path, he (Long) showed me we could have a better pass at the ball if we brought the hands down."

Wilson has been with the Pirates for half of their major league record-tying 16 consecutive losing seasons, and he knows he is running out of time to play for a winner. He was nearly traded last season, and again during the offseason, and is all but certain to be dealt this season before his contract runs out.

Perhaps the only scenario in which Wilson stays with Pittsburgh the whole season, other than getting hurt, is for the Pirates to play far better than expected from a team that lost 379 games the last four seasons.