

Dallas softball

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of the basketball season. Becky tore her anterior cruciate ligament - a dreaded injury that is becoming all too common among high school and college athletes. Pope has had to move starting center fielder Lisa Tomaine to catcher in an effort to replace Therese Paxton who graduated. Back-up catcher Carrie Cave missed all of last season with an injury and is once again not with the team.

"Lisa has responded to the challenge and is making progress," said Pope. "Our other problem is that we're not very deep in pitching."

Junior Sandy McCloud is the ace of the staff and the only returnee from the feared threesome Dallas threw at opposing offenses last year. Sarah Barlow (junior) and Suzanne Fisher (senior), neither of whom have pitched at the high school level, will also see time on the mound.

Assistant coach Laura Poynton is one of the best in the district at handling the pitchers. Don't be surprised if she finds another quality arm, probably among the underclassmen, to aide the staff by midseason.

Dallas should receive plenty of production and leadership from their infielders. The right side is set with a couple of returning first team all stars. Fisher was not only the top first baseman last year, but led the league in hitting (.518) and doubles (10). Suzanne also smacked two home runs.

Holly Baseski returns at second base. Holly batted .365 a season ago while supplying tremendous defense. Shortstop Melanie Getz was another solid performer both on the field and at the plate (.403). Freshman Katie Austin will start at third base in place of Beisel. Thus far she's done a remarkable job and the coaching staff is ecstatic over her

Lehman softball

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"Darby can field and she's great with the bat," said Finn. "She's just an all-around athlete."

With their mix of power and speed the key to the Lake-Lehman lineup may be first baseman Kelly Spencer. Beginning her fourth season in the starting lineup, the senior Spencer is well known for always hustling and having a keen awareness of the game. The Lehman coaches would love to see her put together a huge season offensively.

Ziomek is at third base after splitting time between second and third last year. Jen Johnstone is rookie at second base, but really impressed Finn with her play during last summer's Keystone State Games.

Missy Gray, daughter of assistant coach Bob, returns to the outfield for her senior season. She'll probably start in left with Nicky Newell in center, who has opened some eyes since making the move to the varsity roster. "Nicky is a real power hitter and puts on a show for her teammates in practice," Finn said, "but she's always shown leadership in center."

Two others fighting for a starting outfield spot are Thrash and Marissa Michaels. Both have been pleasant surprises during the pre-season.

Halowich is the Lady Knights utility person. In addition to being the club's relief pitcher she can handle playing the outfield or an infield position. For now, Finn doesn't plan on playing a designated hitter often.

In order to qualify for the post-season, Lehman will have to finish on top in the AAA-North battle. Two teams standing in the way are Wyoming Valley West and last year's champion, Tunkhannock.

"These girls do have a strong sense of unity and the willingness to work hard."

Jay Pope
Dallas coach

progress.

For now, those four will see the bulk of the infield action. Center fielder Mary Ann Selenski will be the first sacker whenever Fisher takes the mound.

Tomaine's move behind the plate leaves Selenski as the lone returning outfielder. Barlow, who played mostly as a designated hitter last year, will call left field home. The right field job has come down to a two-way battle between freshmen Kristin Race and Sara Millington. McCloud will roam the outfield when not pitching.

Pope is also pleased with the intense competition for the designated hitter job between Jamie Krauss and Amy Kapral. Kapral could also play the outfield if needed.

With the experienced infield to carry them, the Lady Mounts will really need to show steady improvement defensively. Dallas led the conference in runs per game last year and should be near the top in that category again.

"This lineup has the ability to score some runs," said Pope. "Our biggest challenge is shutting down the other team."

Fisher and Barlow will supply the long ball. Team speed appears to be above average with Selenski, McCloud, Baseski and Getz leading the way.

"As long as we stay focused, we'll be okay in the long run," added Pope. "Unfortunately we've shown the capacity to give up the big inning. We can score runs and have the tendency to give up runs."

"I'm excited about the quality of each individual player on this team."

Flossie Finn
Lake-Lehman coach

"Valley West could be the team," Finn said. "They had all young players last year. Most of them are back and they return the same battery. Young coaches have an advantage immediately because they relate well to the young people."

That comment is in reference to Cindy Slocum, now in her second year at the Valley West helm. Slocum earned league MVP honors at Lehman before becoming an All-American at Bloomsburg University.

Barring any injuries, Lehman will field the right mix of players. The telling point of the campaign could be the changes made in the Black Knights' battery and consistent hitting.

The Knights offense was streaky during last year, as the Knights finished in a second place tie with Dallas. They defeated the champion Lady Tigers on both occasions they met and scored in double figures six different times. Lehman was also shut out, however, in three of their five losses.

"We'll play strong defense," Finn said. "We need to have consistent hitting. We can't just have the same girls producing offensively. Hitting has to come from the top, bottom and middle of the lineup plus different people every game."

Area talent

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for granted. He figures that Northwest will surprise some people and acknowledges that last year's playoff qualifiers, Hanover and Meyers, will once again be the teams to beat. But Twardowski is plenty excited about his own team's chances.

BISHOP O'REILLY SOFTBALL

Head coach: Mike Twardowski
Assistant: Keith Keiper
Players out: 21
'95 record: 9-7 WVC-AA
Home field: Kingston Recreation Field on Third Avenue

Any discussions about the O'Reilly roster beings with all-star pitcher Maureen McGlynn. One of the league's premier hurlers, she struck out 150 batters in 94 innings as a junior.

During the preseason the club has shown good defense, decent speed, some power and overall improved hitting.

"We're looking for improved offense and we've been hitting the ball well," Twardowski said. "Although we squeaked by Northwest in the season opener (1-0) it looks like we're going to score a lot of runs."

One of the sophomores drawing rave reviews last spring was Maureen Paley of Dallas. She's the first baseman and number two pitcher. Down the line Twardowski anticipates little problem with Paley becoming the club's ace on the hill after McGlynn's departure.

Another Back Mountain resident will start at the other infield corner position, at least some of the time. In addition to power at the plate, freshman Robyn Considine has displayed a fine glove. She'll split time at the hot corner with Jessica Skursky. Up the middle O'Reilly will start Mary McCabe (2B) and Sa'Raya Harden (SS). Harden paced AA players in triples with six and became one of the few freshman in school history to top the .400 mark (.408).

Maureen Regan is back behind the plate. The senior led the team in hitting last year at a .444 clip. Outfield playing time will be shuttled among four players. Del Priore, Maria Jankowiak, Adrienne Gushka and Melissa Heffron.

Other Back Mountain players fighting for quality playing time are Trish Kristen and Ellen Charnick. Kristen is a senior from Dallas Township; she backs up Paley at first. Charnick, a sophomore, is pushing for an outfield position.

WEST SIDE TECH SOFTBALL

Head coach: Tony Chiarucci
Assistant: John McNeil
Players out: 17
'95 record: 2-14 WVC-AA
Home field: Behind the high school in Pringle

West Side Tech

As the basketball season was winding down, West Side Tech coach Sally Mock decided to give up her status as head coach for two varsity sports. In February she resigned as Tech's softball mentor.

Administration from the Pringle school knew exactly where to find a quality leader, one who knows and can teach the game, in a hurry. The Back Mountain of course!

Tony Chiarucci, Mock's assistant basketball coach, knew what was happening and immediately applied for the opening. Chiarucci, a teacher at the Dallas Middle School for over 20 years, got the job. He put together quite a resume leading the Dallas freshman softball team over the years.

"The Tech administration knew Dallas had a good reputation in the sport," Chiarucci said, "and felt I was qualified to do the job. I'm excited, it's a step up for me to coach a varsity program."

Tony proceeded to bring assistant coach John McNeil along with him. McNeil specializes in pitching. He and Chiarucci have received due credit by preparing Dallas girls for the varsity program, especially in the area of fundamentals. They've equally recognized for their contributions to the Dallas football team as assistant coaches. McNeil also guides the freshman boys hoopsters at Dallas. The busy duo are eager and presumably ready for their next task - upgrading the Tech program, which has no feeder system.

"We're bringing the old Dallas mentality," Chiarucci said. "We're aggressive and trying to teach the game. It might take a year or two to change the 'we're not that good attitude', but we will."

Tony has stressed to his team that Tech's winning percentage is no reflection on the girls' ability. It's just that the other teams are better prepared, especially in the

pitching department. The biggest surprise for the new coaches was the fact that many of the girls have never played fast pitch softball. A good percentage of them participated in slow pitch at the youth level.

Mainly because of pitching and experience the top four teams, O'Reilly, Hanover, Meyers and Northwest, are a little out of Tech's league. They do, however, feel they can field a competitive squad against the other four teams in their division. The Lady Titans are young and will start just one senior.

"Our outlook is to take our lumps and come back fighting next year," said Chiarucci, "but maybe we'll win some games now. If the girls stay around we should be good next year. Most of the league's best pitchers are graduating."

Tech will rely heavily on the contributions of four players. Pitcher Lisa Sarsala is the best athlete on the team. Not far behind is shortstop Susan Munster. Both are juniors and will flip positions when needed. The other two are freshman Tammy Hufford and Linda Shappal.

Sophomore Susan Smith is the lone Back Mountain player on the roster. She's out with an injured index finger and should return to action by late April. She's competing for a spot in the outfield.

The hiring of Chiarucci and McNeil is a major boost for the Lady Titans softball team, plus it allows Mock to concentrate on softball. It's also a pleasure to see the ever dedicated Chiarucci land a head varsity position.

"I'm excited because this (situation) is really about teaching and coaching" said Chiarucci. "We're excited about the girls' attitude. They want to learn and play. They want to be good."

WYOMING SEMINARY

Head coach: Bill Summerhill
Assistants: Judy Harvey and Nicole Chase
Players out: 21
'95 record: 7-9 WVC-AA
Home field: Nesbitt Field, Hoyt Street Kingston

Wyoming Seminary

Victories for the Wyoming Seminary softball team have been few and far between since the Wyoming Valley Conference added girls' soccer to the spring schedule in 1990. That is expected to change sometime soon. Seminary won just five games over a five year period, but finished the 95 season at 7-9.

"We turned the corner last year," said head coach Bill Summerhill, "and return quite a few of those players. I'm encouraged, this is my best team in six years."

The Blue Knights will showcase one of the league's outstanding pitchers in junior Nicole Coffee. Summerhill feels they have the potential to be a good hitting team too. The defense needs improvement.

The Lady Knights will start an all Back Mountain infield of juniors Emily Slaff, Courtney Williams and Jennifer Stolarick, plus freshman Gwen Langdon at least some of the time.

Co-captain Slaff plays third. She's a power hitter and a steady fielder. Langdon is hoping to make the best of her early look at shortstop. She has shown good technique at the position and is expected to supply some timely hits for the team. Switch-hitting Courtney Williams plays second while Stolarick plays first and is the team's backup catcher. She and Slaff will provide run production in the middle of the lineup.

"Jennifer has improved a lot, throwing, hitting and fielding" Summerhill said. "She played ball over the summer and worked on her catching, so she's an important player for us."

There's healthy competition throughout the squad including a three way race for the number two pitching spot. Carolyn Selenski and Karen Bradley are returning starters in the outfield.

Seminary is shooting for a .500 season, perhaps winning a game or two over the league's top four teams during the latter part of the season, with the intent of challenging for the league title in '97. For that to happen the young players will need to improve just as much as last season. The Lady Knights will have to hit more consistently and the fielding must really improve.

"I suppose this is the year we'll challenge the better teams," Summerhill said, "and next year we'll be one of the better teams."

Jr. Knights will meet April 18

The Lake-Lehman Jr. Knights Football will meet April 18 at 8 p.m. at the Harveys Lake Legion. All football cheerleading coaches are urged to attend. The meeting is also open to parents of football players and parents of cheerleaders.

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Winners at Crestwood

Wrestlers from the Back Mountain Wrestling Club recently participated in the Crestwood elementary wrestling tournament. Members who finished in the top of their class were: Chuck Kopetchne, fourth place; Tim Shaw, fourth place; Andrew Shaw, second place and Mark Shaw, second place.