

Sports Week

SOFTBALL PREVIEW



Infielder Jess Maciejczak is expected to be one of the top players for Lake-Lehman this season.

PHOTOS FOR THE POST/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

Young Mounts hope to stay among elite

By DAVE KONOPKI
Post Editor

DALLAS TWP. – It might be hard to imagine a high school softball team with nine freshmen on a 16-player roster trying to improve on a season that resulted in a 17-2 record and a division championship.

But head coach Joyce Tinner has guided the Dallas program to among the elite in the Wyoming Valley Conference. And that means high expectations every season.

Last year, the Mountaineers posted an impressive 17-1 record during the regular season, cruising to the WVC Division II championship. Dallas lost against Lakeland in the District 2 Class 2A championship game.

"We worked very hard to get reputation back at Dallas to the point where it was when I played," said Tinner, a former Dallas and Penn State University standout in the late 1980s. "Want to be as good as last year or perhaps even better. Whether or not that happens remains to be seen. But we're going to take it one small step at a time."

With only one senior on its roster, Dallas returns four starters from last year's squad. But only two of those – senior pitcher Sara Swepston and junior catcher Kasey Corbett – will be playing the same position they did a year ago. Junior Lindsay McCabe and sophomore Ally Evans will pitch and play in the outfield this season after splitting time at shortstop last year.

Junior Juliannette Pettit could feel like a bouncing ball during the season. The junior is expected to see playing time at third base, second base, outfield and pitcher. Junior Steph Pace, who split time with Pettit last year at second base, returns to the position. She will also play in the outfield.

"I think our flexibility can be a plus," said Tinner, who enters her 10th season as head coach. "Pettit can be a key to our defense this season. We're going to have to plug her in where she's needed and she's willing to do it. She can be the starter at any one of those positions. She's really stepped up to the plate."

If the Mountaineers have a weakness, it's their lack of experience. There's a chance two freshmen will start at first and third base.

"We're inexperienced in key spots, no doubt about it," said Tinner, who expects Lake-Lehman to be the team to beat in the division. "We might start two freshmen at the corners. We've never done that before. In a way, it's scary. But they're not intimidated, which is great."

The coach says her team has been spending a lot of time working on fundamentals.

"Repetition is very important with a young team," she said. "We're constantly doing defensive drills and running drills. We're trying to get team unity and the team cohesiveness that we did last year. It's tough to match, but so far so good. The attitude of our players has been great."

Black Knights have lofty goals

Experienced Lake-Lehman squad hoping to win WVC, D2 championships

By DAVE KONOPKI
Post Editor

LEHMAN TWP. – With eight returning starters, including one of the premier pitchers in District 2, this could be a special season for the Lake-Lehman softball team. Head coach Stacey Stack knows that. And so does her players.

"From the first day of our preseason, our motto is never to be content until we reach the district championship game," said Stack, who enters her third year as head coach. "That's our goal. The girls expect nothing less."

The Black Knights open play in the Wyoming Valley Conference Division II tomorrow afternoon with a game at Meyers. All WVC games begin at 4:15 p.m. Lake-Lehman will play its home opener Thursday, April 6 against Nanticoke Area in an early season matchup between two of the better teams in the division.

Senior pitching standout Sheree Horvath leads the contingent of eight returning starters. The Slippery Rock University-bound right-hander posted a 13-3 record last season, striking out 183 batters



Lake-Lehman's Jess Maciejczak puts the tag on Abby Sordoni of Wyoming Seminary during a preseason game.

in 113 innings. Horvath allowed just 46 hits and 18 walks.

"Sheree has improved tremendously," said Stack. "She has command of all five pitches. When she was younger, she

used to rely on speed. Now, she's more of a complete pitcher."

Stack, a former standout catcher at

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Sheree Horvath enters the season as one of the premier players in the Wyoming Valley Conference.

BASEBALL PREVIEW

Group of experienced seniors hoping to make a big hit in final year at Dallas

By DAVE KONOPKI
Post Editor

DALLAS TWP. – They do more for the Dallas baseball team than just hit, field and throw. Maybe that's why head coach Ken Kashatus wouldn't trade his four seniors for any group of seniors in the Wyoming Valley Conference.

"It's a great group of kids," said the fourth-year coach, referring to Mike Race, Dave Harding, Adam King and Joe Lambert. "All four are really team guys. It's like having four more assistant coaches. They take care of a lot of the little things. They've been around and they want to help make it the best team it can be."

And they're not just nice kids. They're good baseball players, says Kashatus.



Tom Parrish is among a handful of Dallas juniors who are expected to play a big role for the Mountaineers this season.

Race, a centerfielder, is a two-time WVC all-star who hit .438 last season

with 18 RBI from the leadoff spot. Harding hit .500 as a junior and was a unanimous all-star selection at first base. He also enters this season as the No. 1 pitcher on the Dallas staff. King hit .300 last season, while Lambert flirted with .300 for most of the season en route to posting a .289 batting average.

"These four guys could leave the program with (a combined) 13 varsity letters in baseball," said Kashatus. "Mike Race is a winner. He brings great baseball instincts to the table and he possesses the intangibles that can't be measured by scouts. I think he's a (college) Division II player."

Last year, the Mountaineers were one

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Dallas senior David Harding is returning for his third year as a starter at first base.

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