

Lakers are serious about upcoming softball season

By TOM BAER

Girls' softball is a big deal at West Bloomfield High. Just ask Laker coach Bill Mason.

"We take softball very seriously," said last season's Observer & Eccentric Coach of the Year. "I treat this sport (softball) the same as any other. It counts the same as varsity football for our All-Sports trophy."

"We've had a winning record every year since we started the program. Once they start winning, they don't like to lose."

Mason's squad was one of the most successful around last season, posting a 27-4 overall record before being eliminated by Birmingham Seaholm in the district. The Lakers' 9-1 record in the Greater Oakland Activities League was good for

a first-place tie with Bloomfield Hills Andover.

West Bloomfield further distinguished itself by winning the Royal Oak Strip and Pontiac Catholic tournaments.

Much of last year's success was due to one player — pitching sensation Laura Reed, who won 16 straight games without a loss. Now a member of the University of Michi-

gan's softball team, Reed will be hard to replace.

But Mason is optimistic about his team this year. "It's not who you lose, but who you've got coming back," he said.

AND MASON has lots of good players coming back. For starters there's senior first baseman Barb Arnold, the club's top hitter last year at .473. Some other top Laker players are junior outfielders Stephanie Smith (.346 last year) and Lisa

Schmidt (.337), and junior catcher Cindy Spehn (.333).

West Bloomfield's four best pitchers are junior righthanders Carolyn Barcewicz (5-1 last season), Lynn Gerber (6-3), and Sandy DeSilva, and sophomore righthander Meri Stockwell. Other infielders are juniors Ann Claverilla and Kathy Guilion, senior Bonnie Traxler and sophomore Teri Dixon. Junior Katie Odena has a shot at the catching position, and

sophomore Sue Vodicka is a candidate for the outfield.

"I think we'll be very good defensively at every position," Mason said. "There's an old baseball axiom about being strong up the middle — and we are."

Stockwell is an excellent defensive player. She was our shortstop last year as a freshman. And Barcewicz is an excellent second baseman. Schmidt will be a strong center fielder."

Mason's big concern is his pitching.

"We've got a couple of good pitchers, but they weren't 16-0," he said. "Laura Reed was an excellent pitcher, and these

kids have to prove that they're capable of replacing her."

West Bloomfield opens its season April 24 at home against Walled Lake Central. The GOAL

season starts April 27 at home against Waterford Kettering. The Lakers will participate in tournaments at Shrine (April 28-29) and Royal Oak Dondro (May 12-13).

Netters tune up

By C.J. RISAK

Three straight league championships, three straight regional titles, three straight years rated among the top 10 teams for Class A. Those kind of finishes will be a tough act for the West Bloomfield tennis team to follow.

Add to that the loss, by graduation, of state champions Mark Pinchoff in No. 1 singles and Eric Garber in No. 2 singles, and one might think the Lakers' days as a tennis power are over.

That assumption would be wrong. Although West Bloomfield is in what coach Greg Kopec terms a "rebuilding year," it will still be among the top teams in the area and will again battle for the Greater Oakland Athletic League (GOAL) crown.

"Bloomfield Hills Andover has to be favored to win the league, but (keeping the title) is one of our goals," Kopec said about this year's squad.

"We're young and rebuilding, but we'll be competitive."

The Lakers are indeed young, with only two seniors among the top eight players. But they are not inexperienced, with four members returning from last year's team that saw action in "about 80 percent of our matches."

The four returnees are senior Steve Lakind and Brad Stevens, Mike Rosenbaum and Scott Vandoren, juniors.

KOPEC ISN'T SURE just who will play where, but gives Lakind or Rosenbaum the edge for the No. 1 singles spot.

Three sophomores — Mike Brown, David Berne and Todd Dennenberg — will all see extensive action, as will returning senior David Brown. There are several candidates for the final two spots on the roster, according to Kopec.

Although no one on the team is as dominating a player as Pinchoff was, Kopec figures that team balance will keep the Lakers in the chase for the GOAL title.

"They (Andover) have two sophomores coming in that will bump last year's No. 1 singles down to No. 2 or 3," Kopec said. "We don't have that overpowering player we've had before, but we'll have more balance than Andover."

Kopec also tabbed Rochester as a contender for the league crown.

"It will definitely be between those three schools," he said.

Other teams in the area that Kopec figures to be tough are the three Birmingham schools, Seaholm, Groves, and Rice, and Cranbrook, Southfield-Lathrup, and Rochester Adams. The Lakers are scheduled to play five of those six teams.

West Bloomfield will open on April 23 at Bloomfield Hills Lathrup.

SCHEDULE — April 23, at Bloomfield Hills Lathrup; April 24, at Birmingham Groves; April 25, at Birmingham Groves; April 26, at Birmingham Groves; April 27, Kettering; April 30, Charleston; May 2, at Rochester; May 3, at Cranbrook; May 4, at Bloomfield Hills Andover; May 7, Millard; May 8, at Southfield Lathrup; May 9, at Kettering; May 10, at Brother Rice; May 11, at Charleston; May 14, Rochester; May 16, Andover; May 17, at Midford; May 18, Regionals.

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