

Shamrocks favored to win another state championship

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They won it in football last fall and again recently in hockey. Can a Division I state baseball championship be far behind for the Redford Catholic Central Shamrocks?

If there is a dominant team in the state, it's the Shamrocks, who finished 30-7 last year en route to the state semifinals before losing 10-9 to Saline.

Virtually the entire CC remains intact with the exception of first-team All-Area pitcher Tony Nozowski, who finished 9-1.

Baseball America lists CC as the No. 31 team in the country and the top club in Michigan. "I only have to be concerned if our guys are reading their own headlines," said CC coach John Salter, now in his 19th season.

BASEBALL

"But I don't think that will happen. It's a good group attitude-wise. They have a good chemistry."

The Shamrocks will rely on power, power and some more power. CC hit .352 as a team with 20 homers last year.

It's a scary thought, but those numbers may increase in 1999 for the district, regional and defending Catholic League champions.

Bob Malek, a first-team All-Observer choice and All-State Dream Team selection, returns in center field after hitting .587 last season.

The Michigan State signee will also get a chance to show his stuff on the mound.

Another first-team All-Observer pick, Casey Rogowski, returns at first base and the outfielder

after hitting .419 with four homers and a team-high 43 RBI. Rogowski will attempt to play two sports next year at Central Michigan.

The other first-team All-Area returnee is senior shortstop Dave Lusk, a multi-sport athlete who will play baseball and football at Eastern Michigan. Lusk hit .405 last year.

Both Lusk and Rogowski were key players for CC's state Class AA championship football team.

And if that's not enough, senior pitcher Anthony Tomey (4-2, 3.77 ERA), another EMU signee, and senior catcher Chris Woodruff (.402, six homers, 40 RBI) return as a potent battery.

Other veterans include second baseman Mario D'Arcy, a slick fielder; senior hurler Dan Duffey (3-1, 2.31 ERA); senior pitcher Nick DiBella, senior outfielder-pitcher Mark Cole (.393, 5-1,

2.68); senior outfielder Brent Zak and junior John Hill.

Promising newcomers include 6-foot-7 left-hander Matt Niemiec, outfielder-first baseman Matt Lorida, a sophomore with some CC heritage, Charlie Harger, younger brother of Madonna University coach Greg, who led the Shamrocks to the 1997 state title.

In the Western Lakes Activities Association, Farmington Harrison is strong again, while Lakes Division champion North Farmington lost the dynamic pitching duo of Jeff Trzos and Kirk Taylor.

Westland John Glenn, 17-16 a year ago, reached the state Class A quarterfinals before running into Drew Henson and Brighton The Rockets, who won district and regional titles last season, lost eight key players including All-Area infielder Tim Reeves.

But lanky 6-foot-4 right-han-

der Dale Hayes returns after going 5-3 with two saves.

Pitcher Mike Swafford, who went 4-2 last year in 40 innings, and senior center fielder Justin Fendles, a .370 hitter, give Glenn reason for hope.

Another possible contender in the Lakes Division is Livonia Stevenson (9-18).

The Spartans have a new coach in Harv Weingarden, who was Mike Koller's assistant for six years. He has a strong nucleus led by third baseman/pitcher Roy Raby, who is headed to Division I Oakland University.

Raby, a four-year varsity starter, is Stevenson's all-time leader in strikeouts and RBI and is a career .383 hitter.

Pitcher Jon Ritzler, sophomore outfielder Dan Wilson, senior shortstop Steve Anderson and senior outfielder Dave Stando are other key players.

In the Western Division,

things are looking up for coach Herb Osterland's Livonia Churchill Chargers (12-10).

Outfielder Dave Waid (.388), "who is very athletic," according to Osterland, will join pitcher Justin Draughn (5-4) and first baseman Eric Lightle in leading a veteran senior Charger contingent.

Also looking for improvement is Livonia Franklin (7-21).

The Patriots are led by senior infielder Tom Jones (.385) and sophomore pitcher-shortstop Joe Ruggiero (.351).

In the Metro Conference, Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook is the defending champion with Livonia Clarenceville (12-14) and district champion Lutheran Westland (15-10) looking to move up.

Clarenceville returns key performers in outfielder Brian Fankow (.370) and pitcher/catcher John Wallace.

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plays look easy, according to Osborne.

"If she gets to it, she's going to make the play," he said. "She has the nicest set of hands I've seen on an infielder in a long time. She has a nice, live arm; she's always in the right spot, always making big plays."

The third-base role still belongs to junior Becky DePott, who will be the DH in some games to give freshman Amy Paquette playing time in the field.

"We're pretty fortunate right now; we have a lot of experienced ballplayers," Osborne said. "I'm hoping we can rally around Jessica Brown the way we did Alana Heikinen and Melissa Mytty in the past. If we do, we'll do fine, because we play good defense at Farmington High."

Senior Kristin Brown, the leadoff batter, begins her third season as the starting center fielder and is the team sparkling, according to Osborne.

"She has as much ability as anybody in the ballpark," he said. "She can hit out run, and her arm strength has gotten better. She can hit the ball, too; she makes great contact."

The outfield returns intact with senior Angie Luttman, the only left-handed hitter on the team, back in left field and junior Tricia Krause playing right field again.

"Angie runs down everything," Osborne said. "She doesn't have the strongest arm, but she makes every play. She's very solid."

"I'm expecting a great year from Tricia. She has one of the strongest arms on the team. The only other player who throws as hard is Melissa."

"My expectations haven't changed. I still have high expectations for this team. I want to make sure the girls do, too."

Jerry Osborne
—Farmington softball coach

The varsity roster also includes seniors Katie Hickey, Sarah Lebel and Nicole Davis, juniors Kim Livingston and Stephanie Pakula and freshman Meghan Young.

The Falcons will play home games in a completely fenced facility. With the help of donations from local businesses, they have a four-foot fence extending 200 feet down the left- and right-field lines and a six-foot fence enclosing the outfield at a depth of 200 feet at all points.

Farmington begins the season Wednesday, April 14, with a Western Lakes Activities Association crossover game at Walled Lake Western.

"I think a lot of teams are sad to see Melissa is hurt, but kinda happy she won't be on the mound facing them," Osborne said. "My expectations haven't changed. I still have high expectations for this team. I want to make sure the girls do, too."

"We're going to have to score more runs, because Jessica is not an overpowering pitcher. She's not going to have nine or 10 strikeouts a game."

"She'll have one or two — and one or two walks — which means the ball will be put in play and we have to play solid defense. If we do, our offense will help us win ballgames."



Veteran pitcher: A back injury will keep Farmington's Melissa Mytty on the sideline at the start of the season.

Hawks from page D1

ERA. "Joe is a very capable pitcher, and he has good command of his pitches," Herrington said. "He throws a good curveball and keeps the ball low. Since we have a good fielding team, I think he'll be effective."

The Hawks return an All-WLAA outfielder in senior Dave Pesci, who batted .333 with five home runs, one triple, four doubles and 31 RBI. He holds the state record for single-game RBI with 11 against Clarenceville.

"Dave will bat high in the order, and we're looking for him to have a lot of RBI," Herrington said.

Harrison has a fine senior infield combination of second baseman Andy Gutierrez and shortstop Bobby Austin. Both are solid in the field and also contribute with the bat.

Gutierrez hit .381 and had 17 RBI; Austin's average was .325, and he knocked in 19 runs. Austin also scored 23 runs. Pesci and Gutierrez 21 apiece, making them the top three among returning players.

"That's where we're strongest," Herrington said, regarding Gutierrez and Austin. "They're captains and I think they're as good middle infielders as there are in the state. They're outstanding fielders, and I think both are potential college players."

"Andy made all-division, and he's better this year. Bobby has excellent range and a good arm. Both hit the ball well."

Senior Mike Head moves from left field to first base in place of Fisher. Herrington believes Head, an all-stater in football, will boost his average from .203 and increase his RBI total (11).

"He looks very strong at first, and he's hitting the ball much better," Herrington said.

Ghannam, who played third when Cornwell pitched, has competition at that position from sophomore Tim Doig and junior Brian Grohman. Junior Brian Nelson, Doig and Grohman can pitch, too.

"I think our infield will be one of the best we've ever had at Harrison," Herrington said, "and we've had some good ones."

With Pesci in right field, senior Blake Boesky will play center, and Nelson, the best player on the JV last year, left. Boesky hit .351 and had nine RBI.

"Blake had quite a bit of playing time," Herrington said. "He has good range and a good arm, and he has good savvy in the outfield. He knows how to play hitters and gets to the ball."

"(Nelson) has the most power on the team along with Head. All three (outfielders) can run real well, and all are three-sport athletes."

Senior Blake Ashley will start behind the plate and has improved, according to Herrington. Juniors Ed Cleland and Kent Taylor are backup catchers.

The varsity roster also includes junior Kevin McVay, a switch hitter who will be a reserve outfielder or designated hitter.

Herrington said the Hawks, who are expected to challenge for the WLAA championship, hope to win 20 games or more again.

"I think we'll be with the favorites," he said. "We'll just have to see how it goes. The district will be very tough, but I think we can do something."

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