

Raiders would like another shot at title

By Neal Zippor
staff writer

For the second straight year, the North Farmington girls softball team met with frustration after winning a share of the Lakes Division championship in the Western Lakes Activities Association.

The problem was the Raiders tied Walied Lake Central both years and each time lost the tie-breaker to the Vikings.

Even though both teams split the two games played between each other last season, the official division title went to Central, which beat North the last time the clubs met (6-3) in a game played in icy, 40-degree weather.

The Raiders finished an impressive 17-5 overall and 9-2 in the W.L.A.A. The chance for a third co-championship is possible but prob-

ably not realistic, according to North coach Dave Brubaker.

"I see us challenging for the league crown again and being in the top half of the conference," he said. "I won't say we'll duplicate the 17-5 record, but we will do all right."

THE REASON for Brubaker's guarded optimism is due to the loss of five starters.

The biggest loss might have been All-Observer center fielder Dana Botwick. She batted .479 with 34 hits and 34 runs scored. She also committed no errors in the field.

Also sorely missed will be second-team All-Observer pitcher Jennifer Lydon, who batted .339 as the clean-up hitter and posted a 14-4 pitching record with a 1.14 earned run average.

Another All-Observer second-team member, catcher Eve Clear (.381), second base-

softball

man Terri Gruca (.319) and third baseman Andrea Borice also were lost to graduation.

"My philosophy is you have to be strong up the middle, and we lost our pitcher, catcher, second baseman and center fielder," Brubaker said.

"Those five players were all skilled and had experience playing on the varsity. That is hard to replace," he said, noting Clear, Lydon and Botwick played varsity for three years.

A returning group of nine seniors and five

sophomores will try to fill those shoes.

SENIOR KAREN Seremet will move from shortstop to the mound. She compiled a 6-1 record last season as Lydon's back-up.

"I have a lot of confidence in her," Brubaker said. "She's a good fielder, a good athlete and a smart player. I think she can go to college and play basketball, volleyball or softball."

All-division left fielder Katie Dohnke will move to shortstop. The senior batted .339 last season.

Seniors Tanya Proctor (.250) will start in left field and Kirsten Schutt will play first base. Schutt committed only one error in 104 chances last season.

Senior Terri Cooll, who batted .428 in limited duty, will catch and sophomore Katie Mackey will be her back-up. Senior Allica

Romig (.304) will start in center field.

Brubaker expects senior Liz Whiteman and sophomore Amy Keiman to share time in right field. Sophomore Allison Stein will bat lead-off and take over at second base.

SENIOR TAMMY Pierce and sophomore Melonie Cheney will split time at third base, according to Brubaker. Cheney is also the Raiders' reserve pitcher.

Founding out this year's squad are Juniors Bari Slinger and Jennifer Holtzman, sophomore Becky Thursam and senior Tracey Gustkey.

"I have all the confidence in the world with the team, but it's all a matter if they can get rid of the hitters and play the way they are supposed to play," Brubaker said. "If we can limit our mental mistakes, the rest will take care of itself."

Marlins reigning champs

Continued from Page 1

man Colleen Nowick, second baseman Maura Pheny and third baseman Angela Mastroianni.

The Marlins do have All-Observer center fielder Kathleen Berrigan returning.

The senior stole 34 bases, including home three times, last season. She batted .375, with a .633 on-base percentage as the lead-off hitter. Berrigan scored 41 runs and posted a .923 fielding percentage.

"KATHILEEN IS fast and her speed is needed on this team," Brown said. "She is a great slap hitter and a great fielder as well."

Replacing Paulin on the mound will be Junior Krista Miller, a back-up last season, and sophomore Debbie Dieckman.

"We lost Mo and Kim - our pitcher and catcher - and those were positions we had to fill," Brown said. "We will start a sophomore at catcher but we have to start somewhere."

Sophomore Kathy Mistersvich returns to her left-field position as does shortstop Katie Heffernan, a member of the All-Observer second team.

"Kathy is also a good slap hitter and has tremendous speed," Brown said. "As a freshman, she developed into a vital part of our program."

"Katie has tremendous range at shortstop and a great arm. She is hitting real well right now." Also returning are second baseman Andrea Thibodeau and senior Marcy Eastman. Eastman is a four-



Kathleen Berrigan
all-area outfielder

year varsity player and will be used as a utility infielder.

SOPHOMORE Erin Wehbe will split time between catcher and third base for the Marlins, according to Brown.

"Erin moved up to the varsity near the end of last season and she's some key bits in the Catholic League championship and in the district game," Brown said.

Freshman Jackie Hajkovich will get an opportunity to show what she can do in the outfield, Brown said. Sophomore Katie Kenny and Junior Mindy Misan will see time playing first base with sophomore Michele Romig being a utility infielder.

Rounding out the squad are Junior Infielder Ariana Pomostowski and sophomore Infielder/outfielder Meghan O'Brien.

"If we execute on defense and offense like we did last year, we'll be in good shape," Brown said. "And if our sophomores execute, we will be in good shape the next two years, also."

Veteran backstop anchors defense

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Farmington Hills Harrison will make a pitching change on its softball team this year, but the Hawks don't have to worry about the receiving end of their battery.

Harrison will have a veteran player behind the plate in senior co-captain Andrea Najarian, a four-year varsity player who made the all-division team last year.

She also will be one of the team's top hitters after batting .320 in the Western Lakes Activities Association.

"She'll be the backbone of our team," Harrison coach Mike Teachman said, adding Najarian "does a great job at baserunning, fielding and throwing runners out."

Junior Trish Sabbe replaces the graduated Shelley Downes as the No. 1 pitcher, having played on the JV team previously.

SHE HAS improved a lot, according to Teachman, but how well the Hawks do depends on how quickly she adapts to play at the varsity level.

"It's a different game," Teachman said. "She was successful last year

softball

because she was able to get the ball over the plate. Now, if you get the ball over, there are some people capable of banging it.

"She's a control pitcher and that's what we want out of her. (Downes, who had three no-hitters and won two last year) threw hard and didn't have great control. Trish doesn't throw as hard but has better control."

In addition, the Hawks have four freshman pitching prospects on the JV team. The top two appear to be Erin LaCosse and Amy Geary.

"As the games pile up, we might bring some of them up to pitch," Teachman said.

The Hawks return sophomore Amanda Ault at shortstop where she started every game last year. One of the best female athletes in the school, Ault hit .290 and will bat in the lead-off spot again.

"The errors she made last year were throwing errors," Teachman said. "She has a rocket for an arm.

We just have to get her to control it, and she's worked real hard on that indoors."

SENIOR CO-captain Lisa Geary played third base last year but will probably move to second. After hitting in the high 200s, Geary "went to a lot of clinics and workshops in the off season" and has become a better hitter, Teachman said. "She was a hard-luck hitter last year. She hit some balls right at people that were caught."

The Hawks have two possible choices at first base: Juniors Heather Hopkins and senior Jodie Whitehead. One will play first and the other an outfield position or designated hitter.

"We made an adjustment in her hitting (moved her feet) and it's paying off for us," said Teachman of Hopkins, adding Whitehead was used as a DH quite often. "Both are tall and pretty good targets, and both have good gloves."

Teachman is considering a left-handed third baseman in Junior Kelley West, who was on the JV last year. "She's an aggressive, switch hitter and hits with power."

"We brought her up for the tournament last year," Teachman said. "She played left field and did an excellent job."

Depending on the third-base situation, West could play on the outfield where Harrison returns senior Colleen Dwyer in center field.

"FUNDAMENTALLY, she has the best swing on our team, so if she puts the bat on the ball she's going to hit it hard somewhere," said Teachman of Dwyer.

The Hawks also have senior Jill Mineweaver and Juniors Tracy Taketa and Bea Ryan to use in the outfield.

Mineweaver had been an infielder on the JV for two years until the Hawks discovered she could play the outfield, too.

"We needed an outfielder and she said 'I can play out there,'" Teachman said. "By luck we put her in the outfield and found out she could handle it."

The Hawks, who won five games last year after registering only three victories in three previous seasons, hope to continue making progress.

"Our goal is to have fun, enjoy playing on the team and look for improvement," Teachman said. "We have to learn the game as we go, because our kids don't play a lot in the off season and the ones who have played a lot of slow pitch."

sport shorts

SENIOR BASEBALL

The Men's Senior Baseball League, for players over 30, is being formed in the Detroit area. Tryouts will be held in mid-April, with games starting in May. Prospective players living on the west side can call Rick Remnant at 261-1735; those downriver should call Kevin

Lekly at 283-5258; and those living on the east side should call Pat Smalarz at 779-8249.

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Farmington softball

Continued from Page 1

rim of defense. Junior Lana Parker and the promising sophomore duo of Sara Thomas and Marie Walker will play key roles in the outfield, too.

Ingalls hopes fundamentals and a sharp mental attitude will benefit the Falcons this year.

"I want to make sure they're mentally strong when they go to bat,"

she said. "In the batting cage, if you miss or foul off a couple, it doesn't matter. If you do that in a game, you're done. I'm trying to get them ready to hit when they go into the batting cage."

Ingalls' message to her team is "If we get beat, let's not let it be because of mental errors." We should go into every game prepared."

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