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Lady Knights look to reassert softball program

By Richard A. Kiley

Usually when a coach is asked to describe the general attitude of a team as the dawn of a new season approaches, clichés like "eager to get the season under way" and "hungry to win" come to mind.

Coach Linda D'Onofrio, however, refers to this year's Bishop Kearney Lady Knights girls varsity softball team as "low key and not very demonstrative" in self-confident predictions of success. In fact, D'Onofrio falls just short of calling them cocky.

"It drives me nuts," she says laughing.

This is not to say that the Lady Knights are not eager to start the 1986 season or not looking forward to a successful campaign. D'Onofrio just wishes they were not so matter of fact about it.

"They're always telling me we're going to go all the way, and we're going to go undefeated," the coach said. "I try to curtail that attitude and tell them to prove themselves first."

D'Onofrio has enjoyed some successful campaigns in her 11-year reign. She has two Section 5 Class AA titles under her belt, but has hit a dry spell of late, with her last title back in 1982. Last year's squad was respectable in recording a 12-6 record, but had an early exit from the playoffs, losing 4-1 to Fairport in the sectional quarterfinals. D'Onofrio would like to see her Lady Knights joust with opponents later in the sectionals this year.

"We run a pretty disciplined program here," D'Onofrio said. "We've never missed the sectionals since I've been here."

This year's team also has the unenviable task of enduring the traditional, grueling schedule which D'Onofrio has waiting for them.

"I don't care about undefeated seasons; if I did, I wouldn't schedule the Fairports and the Penfields and a couple of the city schools in non-league games," D'Onofrio said. "We'll have a few losses, but the tough schedule will have us ready for the sectionals."

The mentor quickly points out that league games against Catholic rivals Cardinal Mooney (defending Section 5 Class AA champion), Our Lady of Mercy, Aquinas and Nazareth will be no cake walks either.

"The league has strengthened quite a bit in

recent years; the games are always competitive now," D'Onofrio said. "You can't take any team lightly."

D'Onofrio lost four seniors to graduation from last year's squad, including her catcher, Vicky Rizzolo, who received a partial athletic scholarship to attend Ithaca College.

This year's Lady Knight squad which "is a little smaller (in number) than previous years," according to D'Onofrio, consists of seven seniors, two juniors, three sophomores and two freshmen.

The returning seniors include catcher Josie Raimond, who has "a lot of enthusiasm and a strong arm," according to D'Onofrio. "We're looking for a stronger bat from her this year; she's real gutsy and exciting to watch."

Janine Berube brings speed and range to the shortstop position but also needs to work on her power at the plate, according to D'Onofrio. "Janine did a lot of our bunting last year."

One of the outfield positions will be taken by Buffy Hodgetts, who plays a "decent" outfield, but is apparently still enjoying her spring break in Hawaii. D'Onofrio expects her to start practicing soon.

Lisa Baumgartner will handle the "hot corner" (third base), and will bat near the top of the lineup, according to D'Onofrio, because her small stature draws a lot of walks.

Kris Grasso, Kerri Bishop and Jodi Zaccour round out the returning seniors. Zaccour is playing her first year on the varsity after two years on the junior-varsity level and sitting out last year.

Sisters of Mercy hold spring sale, supper

The Sisters of Mercy will hold their annual spring sale and home-cooked roast beef supper on Saturday, April 12, from 3-8 p.m. at their motherhouse and Mercy High School, 1437 Blossom Hill Rd., Brighton.

The sale features homemade bread, baked goods, and handcrafts.

Supper tickets are available at the door or ahead of time by calling (716)482-5442. Tickets for adults are \$5; for senior citizens, \$4; and for children under 10, \$2.

Proceeds are earmarked for the upkeep of

Junior Anne Marie Rivaldo seems to be this year's utility player, and her versatility will probably be used "anywhere," according to D'Onofrio.

Other juniors are Molly Dillon, who also brings two years of JV experience to the Lady Knights varsity squad.

Kelly Curcio, Monique Mate and Julie Natale comprise the rest of the juniors on this year's squad. D'Onofrio is counting on Curcio's pitching abilities, and Curcio also may see time at third or shortstop because of her adept fielding. Mate will definitely play the outfield, most likely the centerfield area.

Melanie Lippa and Pam Buddendeck are the two freshmen on this year's team. D'Onofrio describes Lippa as a "real natural" and adds jokingly, "I think her dad has been working with her quite a bit."

Buddendeck is following in the footsteps of her sister Beth (who now attends St. John Fisher) on the mound for D'Onofrio. Unlike her sister who used a straight delivery to pitch, Pam is trying to master the "windmill" pitch.

The Lady Knights will don new uniforms this year, with long pants no less, and will also host the first-ever "Lady-Kings Tournament" with Horseheads, Rush-Henrietta Sperry and Hilton all competing under the lights in McAvoy Park.

In concluding her appraisal of this year's team, D'Onofrio said "We should win 75-80 percent of our ball games, and I certainly expect them to make the sectionals."

Maybe the team's attitude is rubbing off a little bit.

High Acres, a retreat and meeting house operated by the sisters in Geneva, N.Y.

CDA meeting to plan party

The monthly meeting of the Catholic Daughters of America will be held on Tuesday, April 15, at 7:30 p.m. in the St. Philip Neri School Hall, 1772 Clifford Ave., Rochester. Members will be planning their card party scheduled for Friday, April 18. Tickets for the gala, which will also be held in the school hall, can either be obtained at the door for \$2 or by contacting Beatrice Schmitt in advance at (716)654-9271.



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