

Graduation toll forces reconstruction for Mooney baseball

By Richard A. Kiley

To say that this year's Cardinal Mooney baseball squad was hit hard by graduation in the off-season is an understatement.

Quite simply, Mooney baseball players probably took up an entire row on graduation day.

Coach Ed Nietopski lost eight out of nine starters from last year's 20-4 squad, which bowed in the quarterfinals to Greece-Olympia, and he now has what many coaches would consider a very unenviable task — replacing them.

"We lost almost everybody from the infield, and we lost the whole outfield," Nietopski said, adding two starting pitchers to the list. "They're going to be difficult to replace ... players from the JV and players who didn't see too much playing time last year will have to come on."

That may be asking a lot. Counting on players who either watched most of '85 Mooney baseball action from the bench or from the JV level, can be scary.

Nietopski doesn't seem to scare easily, though.

"We're going to be a young, inexperienced club in key positions, so we'll have to have patience with that," Nietopski said. "I think as the season goes on, our club we'll get stronger. They'll have to get their feet wet."

There will be a lot of wet feet walking around the Mooney locker room this season. John Mason, a shoe-in for the third-base spot, is the only returning starter for Mooney. Mason played third as a sophomore last year and has built up a lot of confidence in himself, according to Nietopski.

The mentor will look to second baseman Gary Bischooping, a senior, for his leadership and keen baseball sense on the field. "He didn't play very much last year, but he has a good baseball mind," Nietopski said. "He's been a real surprise; he's come along quite quickly."

The catching duties will probably be shared by seniors Greg Mason and Tony Messura, replacing the departed Gary Shaw. Mason caught nearly half of Mooney's games last year, according to Nietopski, and Messura saw work as a designated hitter. Nietopski likes Mason's steady defensive play behind the plate, but doesn't want to waste Messura's potent bat, so Mooney fans may also see Messura in the outfield.

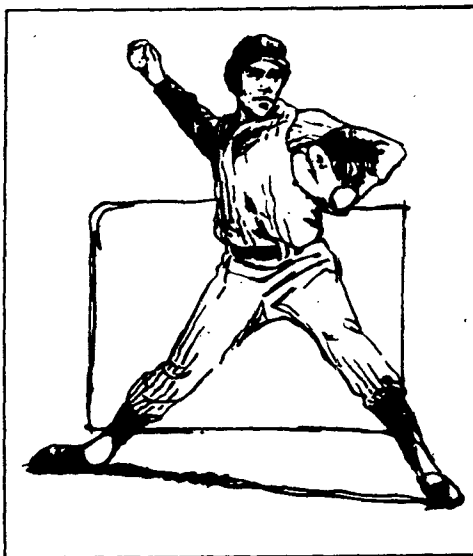
First base is crowded this spring with three competent players vying for the starting spot. Junior Pete Leicht sports a steady glove and a pretty good bat. Left-handed slugger Brian Puffer and Scott Trapp, a new addition, provide more than adequate back-up in case any one of the three falter.

Kevin Kolb and Steve Olek fill the remaining infield slots. Both are solid defensively, a trait linked to many of Nietopski's teams of the past.

"Our trademark has always been a good defensive infield, and an outfield that could hit," Nietopski said.

With fleet-footed Paul Brescia, a good college prospect according to Nietopski, the centerfield position is in good hands. "He's an outstanding ball player ... He covers the outfield like a blanket," Nietopski said.

Mark Bartlet and Steve Meisenzahl will also see action, and Nietopski is even giving



Paul Brescia's sophomore brother Dave "a good look."

The biggest question mark for the veteran coach has to be the squad's pitching situation. Nietopski hopes that left-hander Barry Papmore's arm troubles are behind him, and is looking to the pitcher for his varsity experience.

Right-hander Craig Banaszewski and left-hander Steve Blake also bring competence to the mound, but neither is overpowering nor has either had a chance to prove himself yet.

"Banaszewski is a real battler," according to Nietopski, and although Blake is not

overpowering, he can get "cute" at times by mixing a good slider and curveball.

Possibly seeing action this year from the Cy Resch's JV squad are Scott Quinlan, Scott Hylas and Mike Magans. Quinlan and Hylas both throw hard, according to Nietopski, and Magans "brings quite a bit of raw talent from Charlotte."

Nietopski is treating the early part of the season as a teaching period for his young squad.

"The only way we're going to find out if we're a good team is if we play good teams," Nietopski said. "We want the kids on varsity to be aware of different situations. There's much more to baseball than swinging a bat and fielding."

Nietopski likens his squad's chances to those of City-Catholic rival Aquinas, but adds that anything could happen because of the abundance of talent in the league. Judging by the experience of their players, Bishop Kearney and McQuaid appear to be the front runners.

"Who knows what can happen when we go along," Nietopski reflected. "I'm pretty happy with the way things are working out though."

Applying the Bible's message

A convocation, "Biblical Roots for Christian Struggle in the Americas: Applying the Biblical Message Today," will be held on Sunday, April 13, from 3-7 p.m. at the Interfaith Chapel at the University of Rochester, Wilson Boulevard. The featured speaker for the event is Dr. George V. Pixley, an American Baptist missionary in Mexico, author, and visiting professor currently lecturing at Colgate Rochester Bexley Hall Crozier Theological Seminary. The event will include Biblical interpretation, group discussion, and worship. Supper will be served at 5:45 p.m. Registrations can be made by calling (716)275-4321.

Cenacle retreat for singles

Never married Christian singles are invited to a retreat, "How Happy the Christian," this weekend at the Cenacle Center for Spiritual Renewal, 693 East Ave., Rochester. Directed by the Cenacle Sisters and Father Francis Blighton, the retreat is designed to deepen one's relationship with the Lord through a blend of contemplative prayer, reflection on the Beatitudes, group sharing and celebration. For reservations and information, please contact the Cenacle at (716)271-8755.

Youth, drugs and alcohol

Two week-long workshops dealing with "Youth, Drugs & Alcohol," scheduled for the week of April 21, will highlight local observance of Alcoholism Awareness Month. The purpose of the program is to help educators work more effectively with young people involved with alcohol and drugs. The principal speaker at the sessions will be James F. Crowley, president and founder of Community Intervention, a noted lecturer on adolescent alcohol and drugs issues.

"Working with Adolescents in Schools & Community" will be the theme of the first workshop, April 21-25. "Facilitating Student Support Groups," will run from April 22-25. Both workshops will be held at the Asbury First Methodist Church, 1050 East Ave., Rochester, and will be repeated in August and October. For information regarding registration, call (716)325-4560 or (716)442-9156.

Bishop Clark lecture set

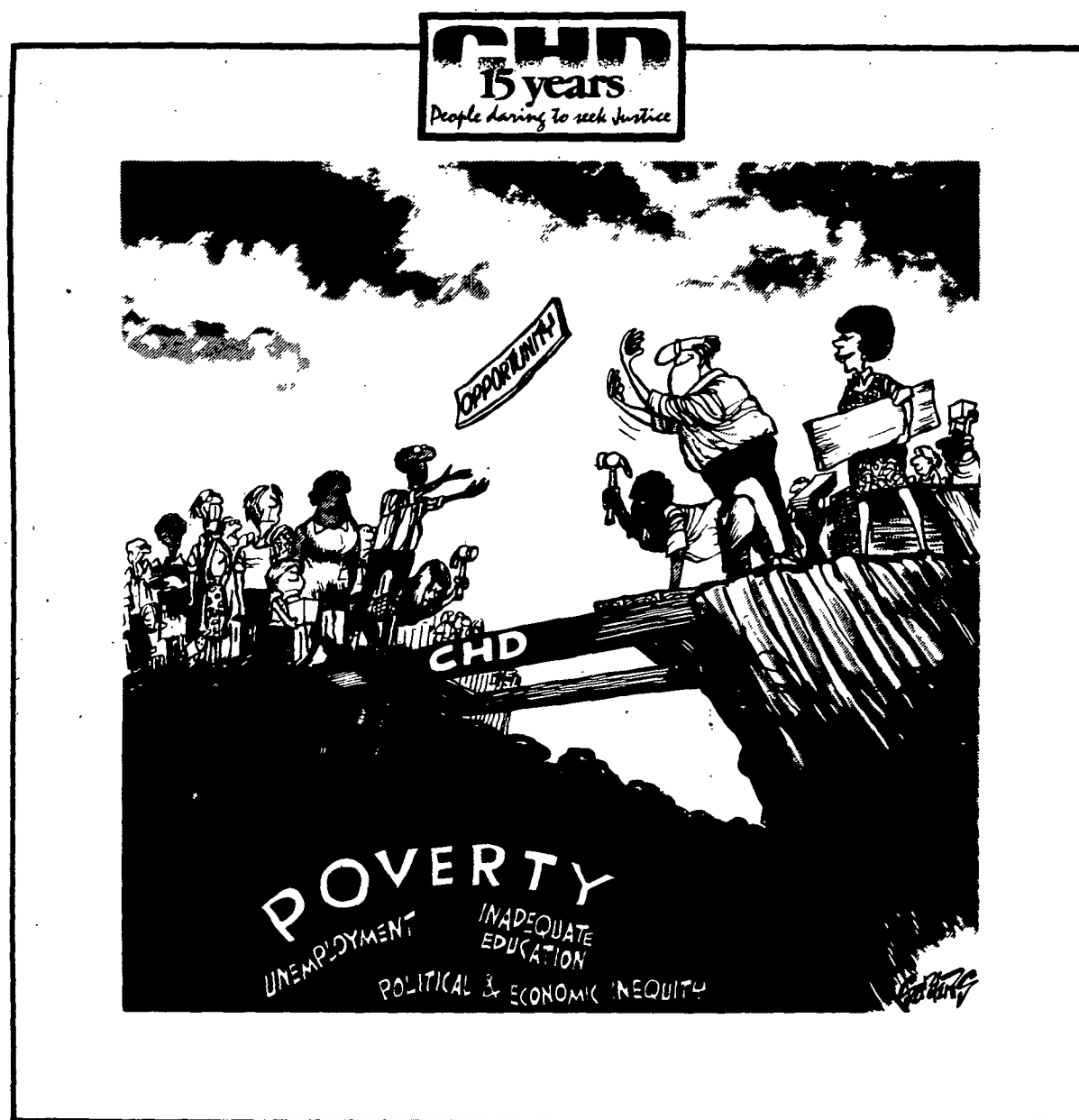
Bishop Matthew H. Clark will speak at the Temple B'rith Kodesh, located at 2131 Elmwood Ave., Brighton, on April 18 at 8:15 p.m. The lecture will be in honor of the twentieth anniversary of Nostra Aetate, the statement of Vatican II concerning the relations of the Church and Jews, what some believe was the most significant Church statement about the Jews and Judaism in a thousand years. All are welcome to attend.

Parent group needs help

Parents Anonymous, a non-profit, self-help organization, primarily staffed by volunteers, is conducting volunteer training in April and May. Volunteers are needed to staff a Parent Helpline for those parents needing support or crisis intervention. Helpline workers, who will undergo comprehensive training, may work from their homes and have flexible hours. For more information, call the Parents Anonymous State Office at (716)454-5066.

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APPEAL SUNDAY, April 20



COLLECTION SUNDAY, April 27