Sports

Kearney laxmen attempting to make inaugural sectional trip

By Richard A. Kiley,

The Bishop Kearney lacrosse team, which has never qualified for the sectionals in any of its eight seasons of existence, is in a position to reverse that trend this year.

The Fighting Kings (2-1) have stuck it to two opponents thus far this season — 12-8 against Waterloo and 15-1 vs. Newark — before losing a tough 8-7 decision to Webster on Friday,

"I think 11 wins will get us (to the sectionals)," said third-year lax coach Jim Burns. "That's our main goal right now. This team has the most talent in the three years I've been

Burns has reason to be optimistic. Although he lost three-year goalie Doug Lamendola and attackman Matt Pease to graduation, his Fighting Kings have the right stuff to qualify for the sectionals. The lax coach knows it won't be easy, however, and if his club wants to reach the second season it will have to win the ones like it lost against Webster.

"We're playing very consistent for this early in the season," said Burns, who played lacrosse at Marshall before the city school dropped the spring program. "Even against Webster, the game was back and forth all day."

Consistency was not a trait belonging to last year's Kings, who appeared to have some games won until the fourth quarter. One of Kearney's most demoralizing losses came against Pittsford in a game that the Kings roared out to a 6-0 lead only to lose 9-8. The Vikings had beaten Burns' team 18-4 just a week before that.

"(Untimely) penalties really hurt us last year; we're looking to cut down on those this season," Burns said.

If Kearney's first three games are any indi-

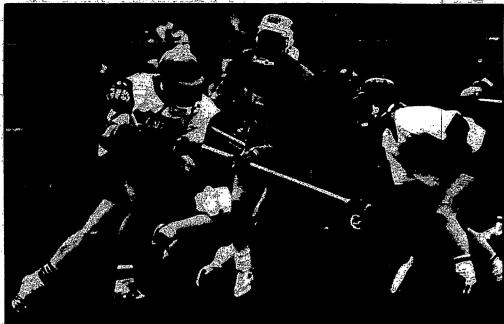
cation of how the team will fare this season, making the sectionals could become a reality. Burns has two thirds of his attack returning in seniors Jeff Hall and Rich Shoap. The two elusive attackmen have been playing together since their freshmen year. In Kearney's opening game against Waterloo on Tuesday, April 5, Shoap scored five goals and an assist in the Kings' convincing win over the Indians.

Sophomore John Hand, who was a standout on Rick Schiffhauer's JV squad last season, is also dangerous around the cage. He scored two goals and assisted on four others in the win over Waterloo.

The midfield positions appear to be in good hands with the returning junior Dave "Beaver" Smith, as well as senior Jim O'Leary and junior Jeff Faling. Smith played an integral part in the Kearney offense last season, and Faling is another up-and-coming prospect from the junior varsity. The second midfield unit consists of seniors Kyle Gross, John Piecuch and Tony Soprano, providing Burns with better than adequate depth.

Defensively, the Kings are strong, with all three longsticks back from last year's team. Juniors Craig Chodak and Bill Oberlis as well as senior Brian Hauer have the experience and bulk to keep the crease area in front of goalie Mark Hall clear. Hall, Jeff's brother, has the fundamentals necessary to keep teams from scoring in bunches. He was one of the main reasons the JV Fighting Kings took 12 of 16 contests last year.

Burns is happy to see McQuaid Jesuit and Cardinal Mooney join the lacrosse ranks, hoping to create a healthy rivalry among the Catholic schools in lacrosse. Although Mooney will be competing at only the JV level this season,



If the Fighting Kings want to make the sectionals this season, they will have to start winning games like the one they lost to Webster last week.

the Fighting Kings will see the Knights' varsity twice. One of those two games will be under the lights at Kearney on May 21 — the last regular season game of the season.

"It's great for the game of lacrosse to see the increasing popularity," Burns said. "I'd like to see the schools in the western part of the county - like Spencerport, Gates, Hilton and Brockport — start up lacrosse programs."

For now, though, the Kearney coach will focus his attention on the Websters, Penfields and Pittsfords. Those are some of the teams the Kings will need to beat before earning a sectional spot.

Teams

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Sindoni and Paul Richardson, as well as catcher Tony Priano and All League centerfielder Joe Anastasi.

The key players for this year's Saints will be mostly juniors and freshmen. Shortstop Steve Vedora, second baseman Ron Cecere and centerfielder Matt Cannon provide a good nucleus to build around. Seniors Sean Sturgeon and Alex Onarato and juniors Dean Askin and Aaron Montago give De-Sales some experience as well.

A slew of sophomores and freshmen make up the rest of the club. Sophomores Paul Priebe and Jeff Taney will play the infield. Freshman pitchers Joe Vedora and Frank Payne will need to prove themselves, as will freshman catcher Jim McDermott.

"I haven't got a pitcher in the program who has ever pitched before," Payne said. His catcher has never played behind the plate before either.

Over in Section 4 Class C, two outstanding games "south of the border" have third-year Notre Dame coach John Cain expressing cautious optimism about his team's chances of doing something big in the Sullivan Trail Conference this season. The Crusaders were 2-4 in their annual trip to Myrtle Beach for the North-South Baseball Classic, and Cain was impressed with what he saw during the

Much like last season, though, when ND

sectionals, errors proved costly. In their opening game loss to eventual Classic champion Georgetown, the Crusaders committed six errors and fell 4-3. An ankle injury to rightfielder Mike Saxe also hurt the Crusaders, but Cain is hopeful about the valuable senior's return.

The trip was a marked improvement over last year's Classic. The Crusaders went 1-5 and never seemed to gain any momentum thereafter. Gone from last year's team are utility player Lee Wisniewski, first baseman Sean Tierney and second baseman J.P. Bernatavitz. Although he will miss their offensive prowess, Cain believes he has the experience necessary to win consistently this

Third-year pitcher Mike Mesuch is back, as are senior pitcher/shortstop Joe Long and junior centerfielder Bob Grosvenor — last year's leading hitter. Also returning are seniors Jim Ermold, Craig Milazzo and Kevin Harney, who will provide Cain with an experienced infield.

Mesuch and Grosvenor will platoon in centerfield, and Mike Bernatavitz is up from the junior varsity. Bernatavitz was the leading hitter on the JV a year ago. Senior designated hitter John Cox and senior catcher Randy Harvey give ND even more offensive potency.

A highlight of the season comes on May 14, when Notre Dame will play in the annual Elmira Baseball Tournament. The Crusaders will open up against Williamsport of Pennsylvania, the same team that beat them

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