

# DeSales looks 'armed' to win sectional title

By Barbara Ann Homick  
Staff writer

It's spring and that means it's time for diocesan high school boys' baseball teams to get out and "play ball."

Coaches at Geneva DeSales, Elmira Notre Dame and Bishop Kearney are all hoping that experience carries their teams to big seasons, while Aquinas and McQuaid look to rebuild with mostly untested talent.

DeSales won its third consecutive sectional title after defeating Canaseraga, 5-3, in last year's Section 5 Class D championship game. The win topped off a perfect 17-0 mark for the defending Finger Lakes West champions, and Coach Frank Pane said he is expecting another stellar season this year with the help of an imposing core of veteran pitchers.

Returning to the mound for DeSales will be senior Jim Vedora (6-0, 0.50 earned run average last year), senior Frank Pane Jr. (5-0, 0.60 ERA) and junior Billy Sweeney (2-0).

With only 11 players on the roster, Pane said he is mostly concerned about how his infield will come together.

"Shortstop, second and third is where we are looking to improve," said Pane.

The 10th-year coach is trying to fill the void created by the graduation of All-Finger Lakes West players such as Paul Prieve (shortstop), Jeff Taney (first baseman) and Dave Barnard (center fielder).

But experienced players such as catcher Jim McDermott (.414), right fielder Joe Vedora (.386), pitcher/first baseman Frank Pane Jr. (.375) and shortstop Todd Hardy (.327) will help the Saints march to another winning season.

Although he is hoping to win yet another sectional title, Coach Pane admitted that winning the league first will not be easy. He called the race for the Finger Lakes West title a four-team battle between his Saints, Red Jacket, Naples and Dundee. All four teams have strong returning pitching squads, according to Pane.

The Saints were scheduled to open their season at home against Romulus on April 8.

Over in Section 4 Class C, Elmira Notre Dame is seeking to recapture the sectional crown the Crusaders earned last season by crushing Spencer-Van Etten, 12-4.

As of April 8, the Crusaders had already won four games this season. ND nipped visiting Troy (Pa.), 9-8, on March 28; defeated host Addison, 6-3, on April 2; clobbered visiting Canton (Pa.), 9-2, on April 4; and whipped Odessa, 10-6, on April 6.

The Crusaders lost second baseman Bryan Granger, left fielder Mike Mustico and center fielder/pitcher Blake Pierce from last year's 15-8 team.

But sixth-year Coach John Cain said

returning seniors such as pitcher/shortstop Mike Bennett, catcher Brian Sheehan, first baseman Rick Shaw, second baseman/pitcher Dave Darmstadt, left fielder H.R. Domineske, and right fielder Geoff Woodworth will give the Crusaders a good shot at the Sullivan Trail Conference crown.

Juniors like shortstop/pitcher Bryan Woodworth, center fielder Chris O'Herron and third baseman Andrew Kane as well as sophomore designated hitter Pat Palmer should also be strong for ND.

Cain said he has a strong hitting squad, specifically citing Bennett and Sheehan. Bennett, who hit .570 last year, will bat third for the Crusaders this spring. Sheehan (.390), who averaged at least one RBI per game last season, will hit fourth.

Other strong hitters include juniors Tony Mustico (.400) and Aaron Meekos (.300), according to Cain.

Back in Section 5, the race for the City-Catholic League title should be interesting this spring.

Bishop Kearney Coach Ed Nietopski said his team's hitting and defense look strong enough to match or improve upon last year's 15-7 mark.

Nietopski, who coached baseball at the former Cardinal Mooney High School for 25 years, has replaced Art Carlisi as the baseball coach at BK.

The real question mark facing his team this year is pitching, Nietopski said. Many of his hurlers didn't get much of a chance to throw last year or are up from the junior varsity.

After losing star pitchers Marty Alexander and Steve Miner to graduation, Nietopski will look to Mark Andolino, Mike Canali and Jamie Twist to carry the workload this spring.

"We should have a pretty decent ball club. How far we go depends on our pitching," Nietopski said.

The Kings will also be without Rene Ingoglia, who will not play this year due to a knee injury sustained during the football season.

"It is unfortunate," Nietopski said about Ingoglia's injury. "He would make a big difference to the team."

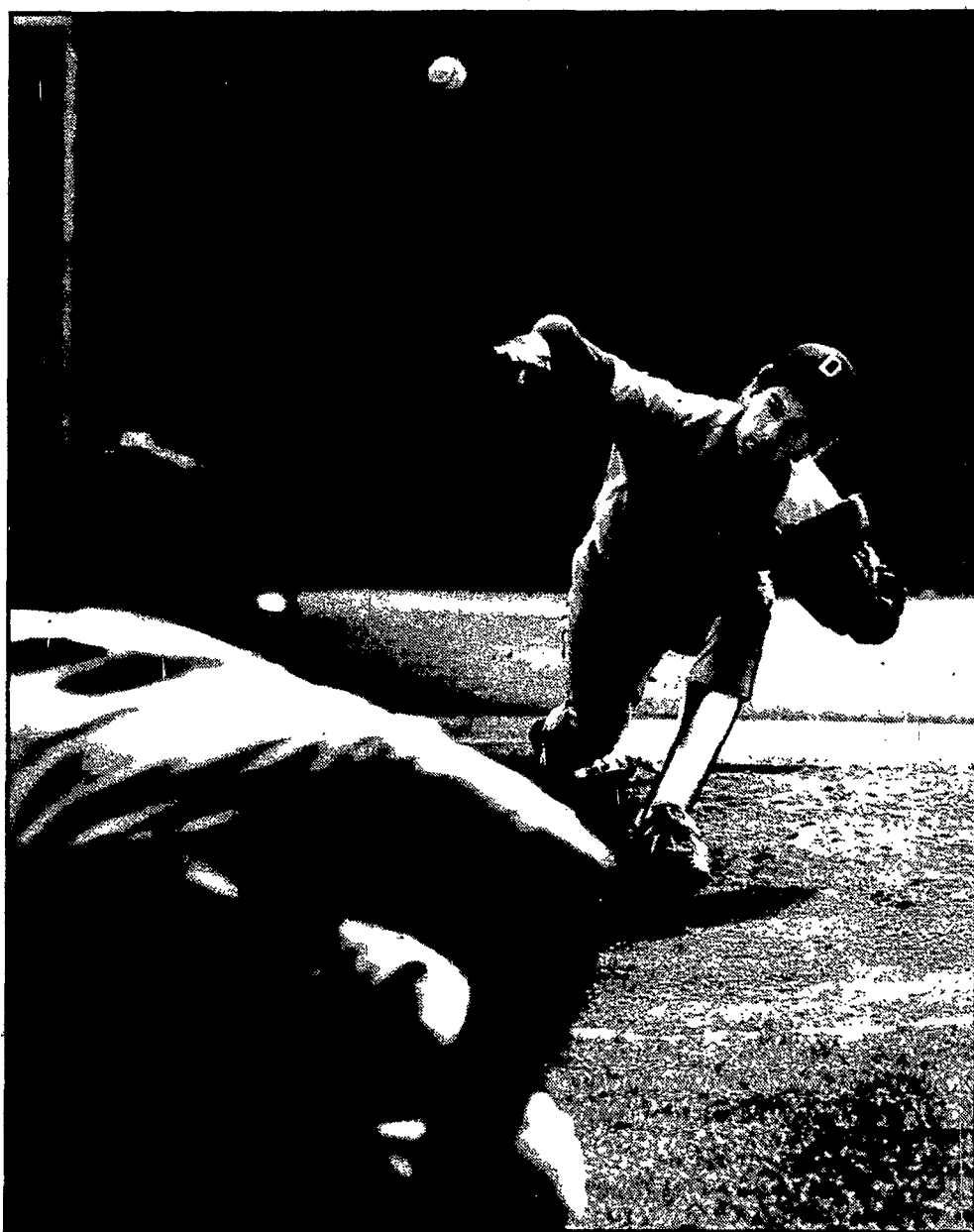
Nietopski will rely on the hitting skills of Tom O'Brien (third baseman), Scott Delgatti (shortstop) and Kory Kuhns (outfielder) for the team's offensive punch.

In addition to league games, Nietopski said the Kings will face stiff challenges from such non-league teams as Waterloo, Canandaigua, Penfield, Webster and Hilton.

"If you are going to be the best, you have to play the best," he said.

The Kings were slated to play their season-opener at Penfield on April 10.

The key to Aquinas' season is how well the seniors and sophomores play together, said Little Irish Coach Rich Pillitter.



Christopher Millette  
Jim Vedora, the winning pitcher in last year's Section 5 Class D championship game, boasts a 16-0 record over the past two seasons.

Coming off of a 9-14 season in which they lost in the first round of sectionals to Hilton, 9-8, the Little Irish are returning seven seniors: Rob Burke (infielder), Bryan Renica (right fielder), Chris Quinlan (center fielder), Bill Hochadel (shortstop), Bob Rule (second baseman), Kevin Smith (catcher) and Adam Tutty (outfielder).

"I'm trying to use senior leadership in key spots to buy time for the sophomores," Pillitter said.

With the loss of Brendan Pickett (first baseman), Alan Schlageter (shortstop), Darren Diehl (third baseman), Dennis Tubilino and Joe Valentino (outfielders), Pillitter said he is counting on his sophomores to fill some key positions.

Some of those sophomores are pitchers Sam DiGaetano, Anthony Fanale and Tony Bianchi as well as first baseman Jeremy Giordano and catcher Mark Johnson.

Pillitter said that the City-Catholic League — which has combined into eight teams rather than two separate divisions

this year — does not have a clear favorite this year. He expects tough games from Kearney, McQuaid, Edison and East in the league, as well as from non-league opponents such as Eastridge, Fairport, Greece Athena, Batavia and Brockport.

The Little Irish's opening game was scheduled for Eastridge on April 10.

After losing almost his entire starting line up to graduation, McQuaid Coach Jerry Jaromin said his squad is "kind of starting new this season."

Those who graduated from last year's squad included first baseman Matt Palmisano, catcher Sam Owens and pitcher Andy Dvonch.

Coach Jaromin — who guided McQuaid's freshman squad for five years before taking over the varsity team two years ago — noted that despite the losses to graduation, his team is rich in pitching arms this year.

Four of last year's pitchers return to the mound this season, including seniors Greg Weishaar and John Kendall. Jaromin also has two juniors, a sophomore and one freshman pitcher this year.

"In terms of depth, we have it," said Jaromin, who admitted that his pitchers didn't exactly rack up the wins last spring. In fact, the Knights ended last season with a first-round sectional loss to Greece-Athena, 4-2, and a disappointing 7-11 record.

Jaromin's only returning starter is shortstop John Barney, but returning players include outfielders Jim Dzakowic, Felix Medero and infielder Jim Viscardi. Although he doesn't have a firm grasp on his team's hitting situation yet, Jaromin said he expects big things from Barney.

The McQ coach said the Knights will play most of their City-Catholic League games early in the season. Non-league games against Fairport, Gates-Chili and Webster loom as big tests later in the spring.

McQuaid was scheduled to visit Irondequoit for its non-league opening game on April 8.



File photo  
Senior catcher Jim McDermott, shown here tagging out Canaseraga's Brian Brewster at home in last year's title game, provides the Saints with experience behind the plate this spring.