

Baseball teams enter 1992 with high hopes

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Early-season bad weather might be about the only factor capable of stopping varsity baseball teams in the diocese this spring.

These squads are attempting to equal the success of a 1991 season that saw several major accomplishments: Geneva DeSales won its fourth consecutive Section 5 championship; Bishop Kearney took the City-Catholic League crown; Aquinas Institute and McQuaid Jesuit had respective league records of 11-3 and 10-4; and Elmira Notre Dame finished with an 11-12 overall record while competing in the tough Sullivan Trail Conference.

Saints strive for five

To bring home a fifth consecutive sectional crown would be an incredible feat for Geneva DeSales, since the Saints only return three seniors.

"This is going to be a real challenge for us. But the way I look at it is that until somebody beats us, we're still No. 1," reasoned Pete French, who has taken over head coaching duties after serving 10 years as varsity assistant for the now-retired Frank Pane.

DeSales' pitchers are senior Bill Sweeney, who posted a 7-0 record over the last two years; and juniors Mike Broomfield, Todd Hardy and Tom Barden.

Junior Pete Mooney will play catcher. Going around the infield, first base duties are shared by Sweeney and Broomfield while Hardy plays shortstop and freshman Jason Lamson is at third. Second base is being contested for by sophomores Jeremiah McGrath, Ron Lawson and Bob Mungo. All three of those newcomers will play in the outfield as well.

Starting outfield spots belong to senior Chris Lamson in center field and senior Mark Higgins in left. Completing the lineup is junior David Cassanta, a designated hitter.

DeSales is trying to duplicate the feats of the 1991 team that tied for the Finger Lakes West championship with a 12-2 league mark, went on to win the sectional Class C crown, and finished with a 17-2 overall record.



Aquinas' Marcus Johnson, shown here sliding safely into second base before being tagged by Marshall's Rick Mercendetti in a game last year, will handle catching duties for the Little Irish this spring.

Kings rely on infield

"This could be the finest infield I've had since I've been coaching," said Bishop Kearney Head Coach Ed Nietopski.

Considering the source, that's an awfully strong statement: Nietopski is entering his 34th varsity season.

Nietopski begins his second year at BK on the heels of a great 1991 campaign that included a City-Catholic League record of 13-1, the No. 1 seed in the Section 5 Class AA tournament, and a final overall record of 20-5.

The Kings' talented infield includes senior second baseman Tom Kennedy, senior shortstop Scott Delgatti, sophomore third baseman Fred Tillenghast and junior first baseman Scott Pecor.

Delgatti is also one of BK's leading pitchers. "He has probably the best fastball around, and he's one of the top two shortstops in the area," Nietopski said.

The pitching staff's mainstay is senior Mark Andolina. Other hurlers include Tillenghast, Pecor, junior Steve Canali and sophomores Jason Derleth and Colin Ribble.

Catchers are junior Chad Gunerra, sophomore Chet Waver and senior Rob Zicari.



Kearney senior Scott Delgatti will move from the pitching mound to shortstop this year.

Senior Kevin Miner has earned the starting spot in center field. Canali, Derleth and Ribble should also see plenty of outfield duty.

"Our strength will be our pitching and defense. If our pitching holds up, we shouldn't be too bad," said Nietopski.

BK will not have a chance to defend its league championship since the school has gone to an independent schedule for boys' sports this year.

AQ young and talented

Don't count out Aquinas Institute just because its lineup consists of no seniors, nine juniors and four sophomores. Last year the Irish did quite fine with five sophomores, placing second in the City-Catholic League and finishing at 15-10 overall.

Two important veterans are junior pitchers Tony Fanale and Sam DiGaetano. Other hurlers are juniors Ron Miner, Tony Bianchi and Shawn Barnett; and sophomore Ken Keilman.

Junior Marcus Johnson is the No. 1 catcher, and fellow junior Jay Johnson (no relation) is his backup.

Infielders are junior Jeremy Giordano at first base, junior Nick Reisinger and sophomore Ken Bianchi at second base, sophomore Matt Delly at shortstop and either Fanale, Reisinger or Jay Johnson at third base.

Sophomore David Khuns patrols center field, with Miner in left and Bianchi in right.

"Where we're inexperienced is second base, shortstop and center field," said 18th-year Coach Rich Pilliter. "Your strength is supposed to be up the middle, and we have promise there, but we're young."

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