

Saints begin march toward sixth straight title

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

True, some integral parts of last year's championship team are missing.

But the same story line applied to each of the previous five seasons with the Geneva DeSales baseball program — and the Saints have simply uttered a collective "So what?"

DeSales is now gunning for its sixth consecutive Section 5 title. And even though star player Todd Hardy is lost for the season with a knee injury, Coach Pete French doesn't see any reason why the Saints can't again be serious challengers.

"I've got good team speed and should be pretty solid defensively. By the end of the year I think we'll be fine," predicted French, whose team defeated Prattsburg, 10-7, in the 1992 sectional Class D finals.

In Monroe County, a slew of veterans should make Aquinas Institute a strong threat to successfully defend its City-Catholic League title. Jesuit's finishing squad is McQuaid Jesuit, which finished second to AQ in the league race last year. Bishop Kearney, meanwhile, plays an independent schedule.

Finally, Elmira Notre Dame is looking for a strong season in the Southern Tier's Sullivan Trail Conference. ND began its season last Wednesday, April 7, with an 8-2 victory over host Thomas Edison.

DeSales must make do without the services of Hardy, who went down during basketball season. The senior would have been a prime-time performer at pitcher and shortstop.

Senior Mike Broomfield, who posted a 4-0 record last year, now appears to be French's ace. He will also play first base.

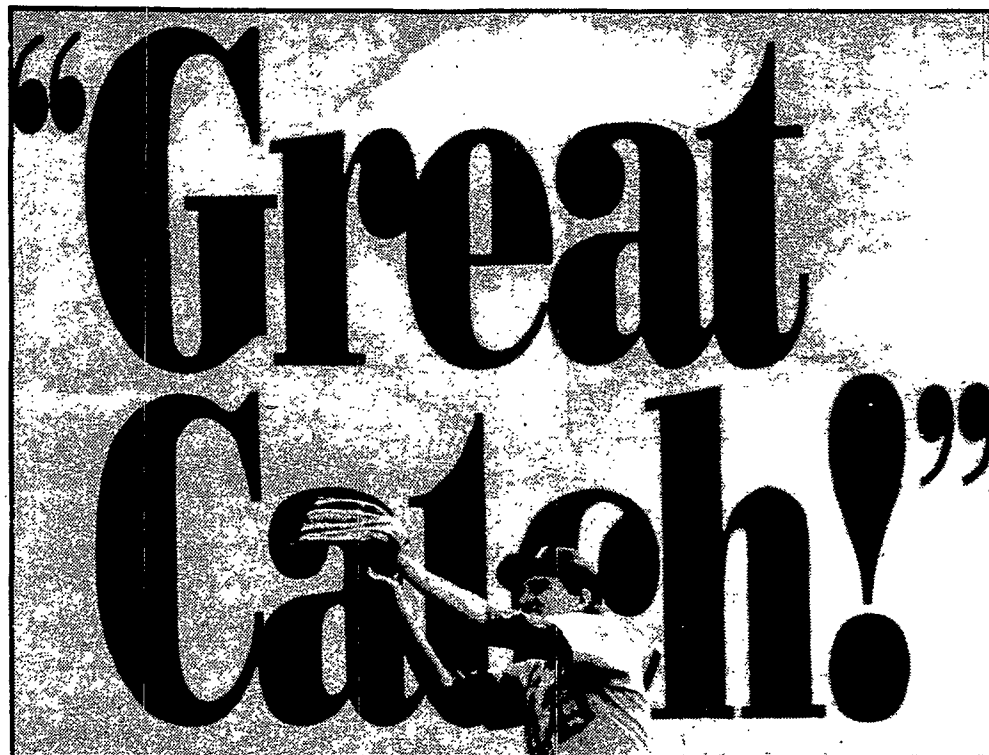
Other key veterans are senior catcher Pete Mooney, sophomore third baseman Jayson Lamson, junior shortstop Ron Lawson, who recorded a team-high .417 batting average last year; senior pitcher Tom Barden, junior second baseman Jeremiah McGrath, senior right fielder David Cassasanta and senior left fielder Bob Mungo.

Junior Dan Morgan, an outfielder and pitcher, leads the list of newcomers.

French predicts that Naples and Red Jacket will be the Saints' toughest foes in the Finger Lakes West league. DeSales placed second in 1992 league play and enjoyed a final overall mark of 16-2.

Aquinas' dynamite veteran pitching staff gives the Little Irish an excellent shot at improving upon their 17-9 finish of a year ago.

Top hurlers are seniors Sam DiGaetano, Ron Miner and Tony Fanale; along with junior Ken Keilman. Soph-



File photo
DeSales infielder Mark Higgins makes a late-game catch during his team's title-clinching win over Prattsburg at Silver Stadium last year. The win marked the Saints' fifth straight Section 5 Class D championship. Key returning veterans are Mike Broomfield, Pete Mooney, Jayson Lamson, Ron Lawson, Tom Barden, Jeremiah McGrath, David Cassasanta and Bob Mungo.

omore Brian Natale will also see extensive mound duty this spring.

Senior Marcus Johnson returns at catcher, and the starting infield is also full of vets: senior Jeremy Giordano at first base, junior Ken Bianchi at second, junior Matt Dely at shortstop and senior Nick Reisinger at third base.

Senior Tony Bianchi, who hit a team-leading .408 last season, patrols right field while junior David Khuns is in center. The left-field position will be filled by one of the pitchers.

AQ Coach Richard Pillitter noted that his club should benefit from its early non-league schedule that includes games against several Monroe County League powers.

"Ultimately it helps us. If we're good enough to get into sectionals, then we'll have a better idea of what we're up against," said Pillitter.

McQuaid, which is coming off a 13-9 season, also has experience on its side.

"We have some pretty good talent. I believe we should be able to compete with just about anybody," remarked Coach Mike Fennell.

Senior returners include pitcher/right fielder Matt Glavin, center fielder Kelly Scanlon, shortstop Mike Roselli, pitcher/left fielder Jim Malvaso, third baseman Tom Brewer and pitcher Brian Cannon.

Other veterans are junior pitcher/catcher Pat Derleth and junior first baseman Matt Barbato. Tops among the new talent could be Chris Pilato, a sophomore second baseman.

McQuaid began its 1993 campaign with an 8-7 loss to Webster, the defending Section 5 Class AAA champion, in a game played April 8 at Monroe Community College.

Ed Nietopski, beginning his 35th season as a varsity baseball coach, is fairly optimistic about his Bishop Kearney squad.

"We have a good strong infield, and for the most part we hit pretty well. A lot will depend on our pitching," said Nietopski, whose Kings went 13-8 a year ago.

Top infielders are senior Scott Pecor at first base, senior Curtis Woods at second, sophomore Ryan Van Allen at shortstop and junior Fred Tillinghast at third. Senior Chad Gunerra is the No. 1 catcher.

In the outfield, BK is led by senior Steve Canali, senior Chris Dooley and junior Jason Derleth.

Pitching duties will be shared by Canali, Pecor, Tillinghast, Derleth and juniors Colin Ribble and Dave Barry.

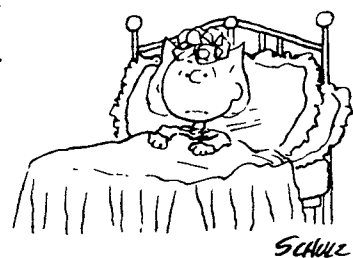
Elmira Notre Dame features five returning starters from the 1992 club that posted a 9-10 finish. One member of that quintet, junior Dan Wilson, pitched a complete-game victory over Edison in the season opener.

Other proven veterans are senior first baseman Pat Palmer, senior second baseman/pitcher Shaun Bennett, senior shortstop John Violette and senior right fielder Mike Cornacchio.

Senior Will Cain, son of head coach John Cain, will compete for the left-field position and also see time as a relief pitcher. Other key players are junior pitcher Tom McNamara, senior catcher Jeremy Kimball, junior catcher Matt Fogarty, senior third baseman John Maio and Chris Paris, a sophomore center fielder Joel Stephens.

"We'll be competitive," said Coach Cain, whose club often faces rugged competition along the Sullivan Trail. "If our pitching comes through, that might make the difference between a good year and a real good year."

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