

Prairie softball ready to rise to a new level

Written by

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(Editor's Note: This is the fifth in a series of preseason stories about Metro softball teams. Next: Washington)

The theme of Prairie's softball team this season is "Raise the level" and the Hawks' senior class is ready to do just that.

Prairie lost just one senior off of last year's 10-18 team and this year's group of seniors is excited for their final season.

"This year we have six seniors, which is not usual for us because we are normally the underdogs," said senior Kaitlyn Baetsle.

Hawks Coach Kimi Hynek is looking to that large senior class to lead the way this season.

"We are expecting them to play a pretty big role, both offensively and defensively," Hynek said. "We are expecting them to lead their team in a lot of ways that most coaches would expect their seniors to lead the team, but we are very lucky to have such a large group of kids coming back."

This year's seniors have been a big class for the past five years, but they have been teammates for even longer.

"There have been five of us on varsity since eighth grade and Sam (Samantha Frederick) started playing with us freshman year," said senior Mackenzie Blaha who batted .233 and was 2-7 with a 2.93 ERA pitching. "We also all played ASA ball with each other through the years when we were younger, so we have a lot of experience playing together."

The Hawks hope that that experience will translate into wins.

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“Once we get on the field we really mesh and come together,” said senior Shelby Crist, who batted .331 with 17 stolen bases last season and has signed to play at Kirkwood. “I think that now that we are all upperclassmen now, it feels like we are finally at the top so we can make a difference.”

This group is setting the bar high for their final season together.

“Ever since we were in eighth grade our goal has been to make it to state,” said senior Katie Wieland. “It hasn’t been said yet, but I think that is in the back of our minds, and that is what we are shooting for this year. This is our last year so it is all or nothing. This is our shot.”