

Schemmel expects another successful season

Written by Jim Ecker

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(Editor's note: This is the seventh and last in a series of preseason articles about Metro baseball teams)

Dave Schemmel keeps churning out winning teams and draft picks at Xavier High School.

The Saints won the Class 3A state title in 2006, finished second in 2005 and 2007, and made a trip to state in 1999 shortly after the school opened its doors.

Schemmel is the only baseball coach the school has ever had, and he's produced a series of pro draft picks in Ryan Sweeney, Nate Woods, Michael Harrington, Brent Warren, Ryan Arp and Jon Keller.

Schemmel knows what it takes to put a winning club on the field and he's confident the 2011 Saints will have a good year. "I think they're very capable," he said, "and I think they're focused on doing a nice job."

Xavier opens the season on Monday against Linn-Mar in the quarterfinals of the Bob Vrbicek Metro Tournament. The game is scheduled for Xavier at 7 p.m.

Schemmel said he does not set specific goals for his team each season.

"Not really," he said. "We've been successful in the past, and the kids know that to be successful they have to play a certain way. We always shoot for making it to state. I think they understand that's not the only success they can have, and they work hard for anything they can get."

Schemmel likes what he's seen in practice.

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"I think it's gone pretty well," he said. "We have a number of experienced guys back, so they know what to expect and know what they need to do this year.

"Everybody is there," he said, "when they're not in soccer or tennis or track, that kind of thing."

Schemmel has a number of multi-sport athletes on his club, but he thinks he'll have another solid lineup once he puts it all together. "We can throw some guys out there who will probably do OK," he said.

Schemmel listed a potential starting lineup that consisted of Alex Ries in center field, Eric Zenisek in right field, Dane Mehring or Ean McNeal in left field, Corbin Woods or Colby Brecht at third base, Nate Even at second base, Kevin Hosch or Mac Mattke at first base, Blake Helms at shortstop and Brecht or Woods at catcher.

The Saints lost big right-hander Jon Keller to the University of Nebraska, but Schemmel likes his pitching staff. "Everybody else is back, and everybody else is healthy," he said. "I think we'll be fine throwing the ball."

Keller went 6-2 last season with a 1.75 ERA, with 93 strikeouts in 56 innings. He also hit .473 with six homers and 37 RBIs and was selected in the 11th round of the 2010 draft by Seattle, but elected to enroll at Nebraska.

Schemmel said his top pitchers probably will be McNeal (6-4, 4.36), Mehring (4-2, 4.38), Hosch (3-2, 6.35), Mattke (1-3, 2.66) and Woods, who played on the sophomore team last year as a freshman.

The Saints graduated their 3-4-5 hitters in Keller, Jake Ratz (.403) and Matt Goiffon (.276). Ratz slugged nine homers and drove in 52 runs for Xavier, which finished 23-16 overall and 15-11 in the Mississippi Valley Conference.

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The top returning hitters among the regulars from 2010 are Zenisek (.429), Even (.395), Mattke (.374), Helms (.287) and Ries (.263). The Saints hit a lusty .341 as a team last season and had a 4.28 team ERA.

Even is the keeper on Xavier's successful soccer team, and Schemmel anticipates him having a big year with the baseball club as well. "I think he has the potential to hit real well for us and drive in a lot of runs," he said.

"Hopefully Mattke and Hosch and Even will be our big RBI guys. Even and Zenisek have to have good years for us to be successful."