

## Cougars have many holes to fill

Written by Don Taylor  
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Kennedy went to the state baseball tournament again in 2012, continuing a run of excellence that put up 33 wins against just seven losses last season.

The Cougars, under the direction of Bret Hoyer, have developed a program to be admired.

Alex Hayden, Nick Appleget, Adam Lloyd and Cody Bell accounted for 30 of those 33 wins and 218 innings last season. Give Devon Jacobus and Zach Johnson 24 more innings and that would mean the seniors accounted for 93 percent of the innings pitched for Kennedy last season.

Bell, Josh Jahlas, Logan Ambrosy and Hayden all hit .386 or better. Jimmy Lizarraga hit .311 and Jacobus added a .310 average. Seniors accounted for 82 percent of the team's hits, 80 percent of the RBIs, 71 percent of the runs and 100 percent of the home runs.

The graduating seniors will be sorely missed.

What does all this mean? It means that with a senior class that was as productive as they were last year, it would have been difficult for even a talented group of juniors to crack the lineup. It also means there will not be a number of players this year with lots of varsity experience.

What it doesn't mean is that Kennedy should be counted out. Fact: Every Metro coach during the preseason interview process said, "and don't count out Kennedy," when asked who the top contenders in the Metro would be.

"Our juniors and seniors are committed to continue the Cougar baseball tradition," said Hoyer. "The seniors were 25-7 as sophomores and won the conference and Metro tournament. The

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juniors have also had success at the lower levels.

"We can use our schedule to develop into a difficult opponent by tournament time."

While Kennedy may not reflect lots of varsity experience, it will be ready to play fundamentally sound baseball. The pitchers will throw strikes and locate their pitches, the defenders will make the plays and the offense will execute.

Teams will have to beat the Cougars, because they won't beat themselves.

Junior shortstop Derek Jacobus (.351) will be the most experienced player returning with 94 plate appearance. Senior outfielder Andrew Johnson (.244) had 82 plate appearances and third baseman Brock Skow (.225) had 40.

Sophomore Sammy Lizarraga (2-0 .311) will be the most experienced pitcher with nine innings, followed by Tony Maiers with six.

The Cougars will start the season with a bit less varsity experience than usual, but they don't lack baseball experience. They will be just fine.