

No.6 Kirkwood softball team expects big things

Written by Jim Ecker

Thursday, 28 February 2013 17:21 -

Kirkwood softball coach Joe Yegge needed to replenish his roster this season, so he went out and signed seven players who were all-state in high school last year.

They are part of a talented freshman class that includes 14 players who were either all-state, all-conference or all-region in 2012.

They'll join five sophomores who helped the Eagles compile a 42-13 record last year and finish seventh at the national tournament.

Kirkwood was ranked No.6 in the preseason poll this season and will open the campaign with a doubleheader against Grand View Friday night in the Rochester Dome in Rochester, Minn.

The Eagles were supposed to open the season at a tournament in Springfield, Mo., this weekend, but that was cancelled due to weather.

Yegge likes the club he's assembled for this year.

"I think we're pretty talented," he said. "We've got some good depth. I'm pretty excited about them.

"We've got strong pitching from the freshman class. And we've got some freshmen who are going to fill in some key spots."

The rookie pitchers are Amber Logemann (Earlham High School), Sam Belz (Davenport West) and Shyanne Saladino (Davenport West). Yegge said two of them will be his starting pitchers, with the third serving as the closer.

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Kelsie Campbell, who went 20-9 with a 2.98 ERA last year for Kirkwood, has moved to first base and will be an emergency pitcher, according to Yegge.

Yegge was still tinkering with his starting lineup earlier this week, but was leaning in this direction for his batting order:

1. Kristen Winter, 2b
2. Shelby Crist, cf
3. Haylee Krack, 3b
4. Kayla Tatge, rf
5. Krysta Tutsch, c
6. Leah Duffe, ss
7. Designated Hitter
8. Kelsie Campbell, 1b
9. Kadarena Sales, lf

Yegge said Hannah McInerney (Cedar Rapids Jefferson), Lauren Smith (Cedar Falls), Lauren Weber (Boone) and Corinne Listenbee (Kansas City) are battling for the DH job and could be platooned until somebody wins the spot.

Logemann is scheduled to pitch the opener Friday night against Grand View.

Winter (Xavier) hit .417 last season. Crist (Prairie) hit .386 and was named second team all-region. Krack (Silvis, Ill.) hit .374 with 17 home runs and was named first team all-ICCAC at catcher. Tatge (Milan, Ill.) belted 20 homers, hit .347 and was named an NJCAA second team All-American.

Kirkwood hit 99 home runs in 56 games and led the nation in roundtrippers for the second straight year in 2012. Three players socked 20 or more homers.

"That's a lot of home runs," Yegge noted.

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He anticipates having another powerful club, but doesn't know if they can approach 100 homers again.

"Last year I didn't think we'd hit 50. And we hit 99," he said. "If we hit 50 to 60 this year, I'll be ecstatic."

Yegge thinks the Eagles will have several strong points.

"I think our pitching is going to be solid," he said. "We've got three pitchers that can pitch with anybody in the league and start for anybody in the league.

"We probably don't have the best team speed. Then again, if we're hitting 99 home runs, we don't need team speed.

"We'll hit," he predicted. "We've always been known as being able to hit. And I think we'll play solid defense. We'll play defense well."

Yegge plans to play for big innings, rather than trying to manufacture runs.

"If we hit like we have the last two years, I'm not going to steal bases," he said. "I'm not going to risk taking RBIs away from home-run hitters. That's my hitting philosophy. We'll slug it out with people before we'll try to steal bases."

Kirkwood is scheduled to open its home campaign on March 23 against Iowa Lakes Community College.

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"We expect it to be another good year," said Yegge, who is beginning his sixth season with the Eagles. "Every year we're competing for a regional championship and we're trying to get to the national tournament.

"If we don't do that, we're looking at it as a failure," he remarked. "And all of our girls understand that. That's why they come here.

"They want to be a part of it. We're expecting big things out of this group, even though they're young."

ROSTER

FRESHMEN (14)

Kadarena Sales (Moulton-Udell), Leah Duffe (Wilton), Alana Boehm (Canada), Taylor Wise (Geneseo, Ill.), Marissa Harris (Shannon, Ill.), Shyanne Saladino (Davenport West), Corinne Listenbee (Kansas City, Mo.), Lauren Smith (Cedar Falls), Amber Logemann (Earlham), Krysta Tutsch (Davenport Assumption), Hannah McInerney (Cedar Rapids Jefferson), Sam Belz (Davenport West), Jaden Compton (Tipton), Lauren Weber (Boone).

SOPHOMORES (5)

Kayla Tatge (Milan, Ill.), Haylee Krack (Silvis, Ill.), Kelsie Campbell (Genoa, Ill.), Kristen Winter (Xavier), Shelby Crist (Cedar Rapids Prairie).