

J-Hawks will improve as season goes along

Written by Don Taylor

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“This year’s senior class will really need to lead by example,” said Jefferson baseball coach Mike Kuba. “We have a group of seniors that are very competitive and they will need to convey that intensity to our young team throughout the summer.”

The J-Hawks are coming off of a 14-23 season that saw them improve as the summer wore on and they need to carry that improvement over to this year and build on that development.

The J-Hawks return about 100 innings on the mound and have five players who saw between 40 and 80 plate appearances last season. They have people who have some experience to build on and when they expand on the innings they play, they will need to expand their production as well.

Kuba is correct when he says his seniors need to help the younger players and the best way to learn is to teach. If they maintain focus, they will develop. In that developmental process they may get off to a bit of a slow start, but as confidence grows so will the skill level.

Key Losses:

Three-year starters Michael Rooney and Bailey Hollingsworth are among the seniors who have moved on. They also lost two-year starters Tanner Unkel and experienced catcher Drew Striegel. Also gone are the important contributions of Alex Larson, Jordan McCormick and Jake Schmidt.

Losing seven primary contributors is a large number from one class, yet Kuba was able to get some of the younger players' feet wet at the varsity level.

Key Returning Players:

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Leading the pitching staff will be Chance Tiedtke (4-2, 4.33) and Jordan Dee (2-4, 6.72). They pitched 32 and 25 innings, respectively.

Colten Jourdan, Sam Techau and Austin Goodell also got some valuable innings of experience. Christian Knox (.213, 2 homers) started 33 games in the outfield. Also returning is infielder/pitcher Dylan Jellison.

The coaching staff is counting on utility player Dylan Wright, who played well at the sophomore level last year as did Colton Spicer, who led the sophomore squad with eight homers and is expected to bring some of that pop to the varsity lineup.

Outlook:

When you have Mike Kuba, Gordy Nordgren and Randy Mathews all on the same coaching staff, all who have been successful head coaches for a number of years, I will tell you that development will take place. They have a core that got some time last year despite the number of seniors they used.

The season is in the hands of those talented kids, and this staff will help them find and use their skills throughout the season. The time it takes to get from point A to point B is the question.

Here in Iowa we have three weeks to get ready for 40 games in six weeks. By tournament time, this team will be a good team. Getting there may weigh heavily on how many wins they pick up during the season.

I don't think Jefferson is where some of the other city programs are right now, but I would not bet against that veteran coaching staff developing these talented young players into a quality ballclub.