

Colonial has six seasoned threats

By Sam Carchidi

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The South Jersey baseball season begins today, and don't be surprised if Colonial Conference teams have an outstanding year.

> Based on their talented veterans, the Colonial looks like it has at least six teams that are threats to win NJSIAA South Jersey titles.

> The select six: West Deptford, Gateway, Haddon Township, Sterling, Collingswood and Audubon.

> "There's no clear-cut favorite, but the top teams can't lose to the bottom teams because we will be beating up on each other already," said West Deptford coach Jason Crews, whose team is No. 7 in The Inquirer's South Jersey preseason rankings.

> West Deptford, which returns seven starters from a 24-7 team, should also be a strong contender in Group 3. The other aforementioned Colonial teams figure to be in the thick of the Group 2 hunt. Haddonfield could also sneak into the picture.

> Pitching wins tournaments, and the Colonial features some of South Jersey's best pitchers, including West Deptford's Jake Rifkin, Haddon Township's Tyler Smith and Rob Harrington, Gateway's Nick Alloway and Justin Brandon, Sterling's Collin McGowan, Audubon's Wade Geis, Collingswood's Tim Kerr, and Haddonfield's Luke Peyton.

> **Standout outfield.** St. Augustine may have the area's best outfield this season.

> The Hermits return standouts to all three outfield spots: junior leftfielder Jordan Morey (.444, six homers last year), all-South Jersey senior centerfielder Alexi Colon (.493, nine homers), and junior rightfielder Steve Schrenk (.418).

> The Hermits also return their top two pitchers, senior Anthony DeLeo (3-3, 3.26 ERA) and junior Brent Reale (3-1, 4.50), and should battle Holy Spirit and Buena for the Cape-Atlantic National I title.

> **Rich get richer.** Washington Township, which was already loaded with talent, got even stronger with the addition of Gloucester Catholic transfers Kevin Barnes (outfielder pitcher) and Joe Jankowski (third baseman/pitcher).

> The Minutemen return six starters from a team that won the South Jersey Group 4 title.

> **Cherry Hill East optimistic.** Cherokee and Washington Township are the Olympic American's marquee

teams, but they can't overlook Cherry Hill East. The Cougars have seven veterans from last year's 13-12 team, headed by standout catcher Shaune Collins.

> **Quakers loaded.** Moorestown should make marked improvement from last year's 10-6 record. In addition to having seven starters returning, the Quakers will be bolstered by players from strong JV (14-2) and freshman (15-1) teams.

> Promising catcher Anthony DiBartolo, a 6-1, 170-pound sophomore transfer from Bishop Eustace, will also aid the Quakers' cause.

> **Brother act.** Camden County Tech could have the premier brother duo in South Jersey. Senior catcher Winston Ulloa and his brother, Wilson, a sophomore centerfielder, will try to build on off-the-chart seasons.

> Winston Ulloa set a single-season South Jersey record by batting .719 last year, while Wilson batted .500. Both trained in the Dominican Republic in the off-season.

> **Mark your calendars.** May 9 is the NJSIAA cutoff date for the baseball tournament. Teams with a .500 record after games played through May 9 will earn berths to the single-elimination tourney.

> A year ago, Pennsville (Group 1), Sterling (Group 2), Seneca (Group 3), Washington Township (Group 4), St. Joseph Metuchen (Non-Public A) and Gloucester Catholic (Non-Public B) won South Jersey sectional titles.

> Seneca, Washington Township and Gloucester Catholic also won state crowns.

> **Extra bases.** Lee Ware begins the year with a 526-273 record in 34 seasons, all at Woodstown. . . . Though it's far from the favorite in the deep Cape-Atlantic National I, Middle Township will be dangerous because it has three quality pitchers: John Hopkin, Sean Schellinger and Scott DeCecco. Outfielder Tom Salvesen, who has 77 career hits, should lead the Panthers' offense. . . . Tim Crawford, a 6-foot-6 sophomore who starred on Camden Catholic's basketball team, should help the Irish as a pitcher and first baseman.

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