

March 28, 2008

## Olympic Conference outlook

*Courier-Post staff*

### AMERICAN DIVISION

#### Cherokee

Cherokee returns seven lettermen from a 24-5 team, but coach Bill Haessler, who has 401 career victories, is still looking to fill several positions created by graduation.

Pitching is strong with veteran Gary Wilson (8-0) heading a staff that will include lefty Don Smith and Alec Bernstein as the second and third pitchers, not necessarily in that order. Wilson plays shortstop when not on the mound and Bernstein is an infield candidate.

Nick Allen (2B) and Chris Carlantonio (OF) are other returning starters. Eric Trebelhorn (OF), Kyle Warren (DH-OF) and A.J. Hewitson (3B) all lettered last year in reserve roles.

"We have some returning pitching and a strong middle infield," said Haessler.

#### Cherry Hill East

Coach Erik Radbill is expecting the Cougars to be vastly improved over their 13-13 record of a year ago.

All-Star catcher Shaune Collins heads a list of seven returning lettermen that includes pitchers Jeff Bohus, Ryan Martin and Pat Thompson, Adam Planamento (OF-1B-DH), Sean Gold (2B) and Nick Petalino (OF).

East's depth in pitching comes into play with the additions of juniors Joe Miller and David Ruthman and sophomore Dante Cassano to the staff.

#### Eastern

Eastern lost nine lettermen, but the Vikings have been in that position many times and still managed to contend, and will likely do so again.

Coach Rob Christ has his work cut out for him with the loss of nine lettermen through graduation, but don't count the Vikings out.

Evan Lang is the lone returning pitcher from last year's (15-10) staff and figures to be the No. 1. Other returning lettermen expected to make the Vikings a challenging competitor include Mike Rogers (1B-P), Ryan Wooden (2B), Will Shaw (LF), Alex Mairone (3B) and Mitch Primas (CF).

"We need to play well defensively to challenge within our division," Christ said. "Our work ethic and enthusiasm are the strength of the team, but a lack of experience and depth will hurt. The depth factor reduces the competition for roster spots."

#### Lenape

New coach Phil Fiore is talking optimistically about the Indians' season.

Fiore counts nine returning lettermen from a 14-12 season in 2007.

Justyn Carter, one of the best position players in the American Division and who also takes a turn on the mound, heads the list of returnees.

Others back with varsity experience include Brian Black (C-P), Matt Conforti (OF), Dan Daconti (P-OF), Tom Doulong (3B-OF), Ryan Normoyle (2B), Kevin Crook (OF), Jeff Eigenbrood (P) and Derek Johnston.

Washington Twp.

There's no way the Minutemen could match the fantasy ride the 2007 team provided when it won the Group 4 state championship.

The Minutemen return six starters from the championship team, including blue-chip senior Mike Schatzman (3B) and sophomore Nick Favatella (SS). Others who started are Mike Giantonio (OF-P), T.J. Alcorn (C), Chris Fanty (OF) and Rob Swift (P).

Other lettermen include Sean Quigley (INF), Steve Brendlinger (P-OF), Denny McGrail (C), Drew Egan (P) and Brandon Colavita (3B).

## PATRIOT DIVISION

Cherry Hill West

Coach Gary Sarno is cautiously optimistic about the Lions, a team that is coming off an 18-9 season and has a half-dozen returnees.

However, only one of the lettermen started last year -- Matt Speckman, a second baseman who will probably be shifted to shortstop and serve as one of the team leaders.

Junior Joe Calogero, who pitched extremely well as a sophomore, will be the staff ace and be joined by Penn-bound Vince Vairo.

"That's where we'll need help," Sarno said. "We lack depth in our pitching to go with experience in the other positions. Our strong points exist in team chemistry, work ethic and the kids' success in the summer leagues."

Other returning players who earned letters last year include Tim Alemi (OF), Greg Sebazco (3B, P, OF) and Dave Bolles (2B, OF).

Pennsauken

The Indians return their entire infield and will field a senior-dominated lineup.

Coach Dave Hower's returning starters include Andres Frias (SS), Cisco Rodriguez (P-C), Nelson Colon (1B-P), Tim Atkisson (OF), Luis Maldonado (3B) and Jose Ayala.

Shawnee

The Renegades have almost all of those players back to go with a healthy Quinton Miller, considered one of the top pitchers in the state.

The Renegades are well fortified behind the plate with Reid Pulford. Other returning starters include Jon Hydock (2B-P), Brett Knazek (1B-OF), Anthony Sellitto (OF), Kevin Hickey (OF), Anthony

Montefusco (P-3B), John Montemurro (OF), Dan Little (P) and Adam Requa (SS).

Triton

Triton has only three lettermen around whom to build a competitive team in the strong Patriot Division. Anthony DiPalmo (OF-P), Will Marthins (INF) and Eric Otero (P-OF) are the lone returnees. Jon Locascio (INF-P) and Ryan Shellock (OF-P) are two newcomers.

Winslow Twp.

Coach Keith Regn counts such veteran blue-chippers as Jason Gladden (P-1B), Dan McGuckin (P-OF) and Tristan Keyser (P-C-2B) among his returnees.

Price Tyler (OF), Chris Maull (P-1B), Pedro Sanchez (SS), Corey Hoffman (2B-OF) and Jeremy Cruz (C) round out the returning lettermen.

## NATIONAL DIVISION

Bishop Eustace

The Crusaders will have to battle through the loss of third baseman and 2007 MVP Dan Sieracki.

Sieracki suffered a torn ACL in the offseason and won't be available until May.

Hitting and good defense will keynote Eustace's success. Kevin Stephens (OF), Dante Oriente (OF), Chris Branigan (1B-P), Greg Brodzinski (C), Jimmy Yezzo (SS) and A.J. Rowell (INF) are expected to swing the big bats.

Coach Sam Tropiano is looking for an ace to emerge from a young staff that includes juniors Kevin Casey and Branigan and sophomore Scott Carcaise.

"This team could be poised for a championship run by mid-May," Tropiano said.

Camden Catholic

Chris Dondarski and Brian Rice were prominent pitchers in the Irish's 20-10 season a year ago. Jim Tarabocchia, the third starter, batted .522 as a third-year starter in the outfield in 2007.

David Smith (OF-P) is one of only six remaining lettermen. Others include Nate Adamo (OF-P), Tim Crawford (P-1B), Mike Conway (3B), Mike McElhatton (2B) and Robert Mitchell (SS).

Camden County Tech

The team has a top player behind the plate in Winston Ulloa.

Ulloa had an 11-at-bat hitting streak last year and wound up batting over .700 on a 5-15 team.

Winston's sophomore brother, Wilson (SS-OF), hit over .500 and is one of six lettermen.

Paul VI

The Eagles have a new coach in Jaime Steward, a Gloucester Catholic product, and plenty of senior leadership.

Two left-handers and two righties are included in Paul VI's returning lettermen. Dan DiOrio and Steve Romond are the southpaws and Andrew Grennor and Pat Hughes are the two right-handers. Only DiOrio plays (LF) when not pitching.

Other veterans in the fold are Brandon Winkler (2B), Nick Mull (3B) and Chris Dickinson (CF).

#### Pennsauken Tech

Returning varsity players include Manny Astacio (OF-1B), Gabe Henriquez (C), Osiris Isidor (SS-2B), Johnny Rivera (P-2B), Jonathan Roman (OF-P), Irving Vega (1B) and Joel Salcedo (3B).

#### Seneca

The Golden Eagles are coming off a state championship 20-8 year, but for the first time in the school's brief history they are without a true No. 1 pitcher.

Three starters return from the 2007 team in Dustin Worthman (2B), Shaun Flynn (SS) and Troy Foster (C). Rick Carr (P) and Damon Valloreo (P) earned letters.

First-year coach Sean Cassel will look to others including seniors G.T. Steen (OF), Jake Yates (OF) and Bruce Kelly (3B).

#### Timber Creek

New coach Frank Torcasio will have seven returning starters.

Timber Creek's returnees include Jim Schramm (P), Craig Lewis (C), Dann Higginson (1B), Nate Floyd (2B), J.J. Williams (SS-P), Andrew Mucerino (3B), John Amato (1B,3B,P), Ryan McKeown (OF), Mike Murphy (OF), Corey Deck (P) and Matt Rosenblum (OF).

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