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Preseason Top 20

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1. Shawnee (Last year: 15-9. Final rank: 12): The Renegades have no weakness, returning seven of eight position starters. Quinton Miller, one of the top pitchers in the state, heads a staff that will build on last year's experience.
2. Gloucester Catholic (Last year: 23-6. Final rank: 3): It's just a matter of reloading for the Rams. All-South Jersey pitcher Mike Eliassen returns to head a deep staff, and there's a fine defensive infield returning as well.
3. Sacred Heart (Last year: 28-5. Final rank: 6): The Lions return 11 lettermen and figure to contend in the Cape-Atlantic League as well as in state Non-Public B. Pitcher J.T. Triantos and third baseman Jon Schmidt are co-captains.
4. Cherokee (Last year: 24-5. Final rank: 4): The Chiefs can parade out three pitchers -- Gary Wilson, Don Smith and Alec Bernstein. The middle infield is very strong but they hoped to find catching and outfield help in the preseason games.
5. Washington Twp. (Last year: 20-11. Final rank: 1): It'll be hard for the Minutemen to top their miraculous run of 2007. Infielders Mike Schatzman and Nick Favatella, a pair of spark, plugs return. Have enough to contend.
6. Bishop Eustace (Last year: 21-7. Final rank: 7): The Crusaders have some big bats returning in Kevin Stephens, Chris Branigan, Greg Brodzinski and Jimmy Yezzo. Loss of Dan Sieracki to injury hurts. Pitching will come on.
7. West Deptford (Last year: 24-7. Final rank: 5): Will hit right away, but a young pitching staff will need to catch up if team is to reach its potential and maintain tradition. Jake Rifkin will be the go-to pitcher.
8. Mainland (Last year: 17-7. Final rank: 14): The Mustangs return entire pitching staff, including 6-foot-7 ace Charlie Law, a hard-throwing righty. Ten lettermen are back and working hard to fill out the position spots.
9. Winslow Twp. (Last year: 13-11. Final rank: unranked): The Eagles have experience in virtually every position with pitching ace Jason Gladden returning for his fourth season. Has a good-hitting lineup but must fill void behind the plate.
10. Lenape (Last year: 12-10. Final rank: unranked): Indians return nine veterans. They feature senior leadership and varsity experience. There is a presence of underclassmen and the team has a lot of young pitching prospects.
11. Millville (Last year: 16-9. Final rank: unranked): The Thunderbolts have one of the top prospects in the area in SS-RHP Mike Trout to lead them as a junior. Good hitting, team speed and adequate pitching solidify team's status.
12. Cherry Hill East (Last year: 13-13. Final rank: unranked): The Cougars are deep in pitching and have good speed up and down the lineup. They have one of best catchers in Shaune Collins. Could

use a little power.

13. Holy Spirit (Last year: 16-9. Final rank: unranked): The Spartans have every pitcher back from last year. They have good team speed and have 15 returning lettermen back and every position covered. Could be one of school's best teams.

14. Pennsville (Last year: 17-10. Final rank: 20): This could be one of Eagles' best teams in overall balance. Coach Ryan Wood feels team is solid in all phases -- not dominating but no weaknesses either. Look for this team to play in Toms River.

15. Cherry Hill West (Last year: 18-9. Final rank: 8): The Lions are a little short on varsity experience, but the personnel enjoyed success in the summer leagues. They have a strong pitcher in Joe Colagero, but depth could pose problem.

16. Northern Burlington (Last year: 14-6. Final rank: 17): They Greyhounds went 10-0 in conference last year and their pitching is stronger now. Same goes for the defense. Six early games against tough opponents will tell tale.

17. Delsea (Last year: 13-7. Final rank: unranked): The Crusaders have six quality pitchers, solid hitting and strong senior leadership. Sean Appenzeller was 8-2 last year and will lead the staff. Team should be in conference race.

18. Camden Catholic (Last year: 20-10. Final rank: 9): The Irish lost the entire starting lineup and 57 home runs. They have three veteran pitchers and, if young position candidates can move up, they could be a factor in the Olympic National.

19. Sterling (Last year: 18-12. Final rank: unranked): The Silver Knights return seven letterwinners from last year's South Jersey Group 2 championship team. Four veterans spent time on the mound.

20. Holy Cross (Last year: 19-9. Final rank: 16): The Lancers were hit hard by graduation but return two solid hurlers in Jared Turner and Mike Loffredo. Three vets return in the outfield. Other positions will be filled by young players.
