

Baseball: S.J. Top 20

Posted By [Kevin Minnick](#) On March 26, 2009 @ 8:33 pm In [Uncategorized](#) | [No Comments](#)

The Varsity spring preview edition will be in Sunday's paper and should be online some time Friday. Here's a look at the C-P Baseball Top 20.



Kevin Casey, Bishop Eustace

1. Bishop Eustace (Last season: 21-9): The Crusaders have plenty of what's needed most - pitching and hitting. They return seven starters, including second team All-South Jersey pitcher Kevin Casey, off a team that reached the Non-Public South B final.

2. Gloucester Catholic (20-9): The Rams are always one of the teams to beat and this year is no exception. They'll be led by senior shortstop Steve Bruno, who batted .541 with seven doubles, three home runs and 15 RBIs in just 11 games.

3. Millville (16-7): The Thunderbolts feature South Jersey's top pro prospect in pitcher/outfielder Mike Trout and will have plenty of experience to bank on. If a new middle infield plays well early, they should be an impact team.

4. Cherokee (14-8): The Chiefs return nine letterwinners and bring a great deal of senior leadership to the plate. Shortstop Nick Allen has signed with George Mason, while pitcher Dan Smith is locked into Monmouth.



Juan Velazquez, Sacred Heart

5. Sacred Heart (25-3):

Last year's top team and the defending Diamond Classic champions may take a small step back but will remain very dangerous. All-South Jersey catcher Juan Velazquez anchors what should be a heavy-hitting lineup.

6. Washington Twp. (18-8): While the Minutemen don't have a dominant pitcher, they do possess experience, speed and depth at a variety of positions. Nick Favatella and Chris Fanty are a pair of three-year starters ready for impact seasons once again.

7. Lenape (20-5): The defending Olympic American champions are a hungry bunch after getting a real good taste of success in '08. They will need solid pitching early until some questions with defense and hitting are answered.

8. Shawnee (19-3): The defending Olympic Patriot champions lost eight starters to graduation but always have plenty of talent coming up the ranks. Anthony Montefusco, a second team All-South Jersey pick, will anchor the pitching staff.

9. Cherry Hill West (16-10): As with most teams, pitching and staying healthy is a major concern for the Lions. If they get quality innings out of Rider-bound Joe Calogero and Dan Hill, this team will be in good shape.

10. Audubon (16-9): Always a sound defensive team, the Green Wave won't let a little varsity inexperience get in their way. Wade Gies picked up eight wins as a sophomore and should make a major impact again.

11. St. Augustine (16-7): The Hermits are excited about their move to the Cape-Atlantic American Conference. With several returning players in key positions, they are expected to make some noise.

12. Seneca (12-9): With eight starters among 11 returning letterwinners, led by All-Group 3 selection Troy Foster, the Golden Eagles have big plans for '09. Expect this group to be competitive and improve on last year's record.

13. Cherry Hill East (12-9): With 15 returning letterwinners, depth shouldn't be an issue. The Cougars' strength is in their pitching staff, which will have to deliver in the always-rugged Olympic American.

14. Haddon Twp. (18-6): Coach Dave Dale believes the Hawks can contend if they fill a pair of defensive holes, and the bet here is that the hole has been taken care of. Ian Lindsay and Tyler Smith - both headed to Rider - give this team a tandem to lean on.



Rob Cressman, Pitman

15. Pitman (18-6):

The Panthers return eight starters from a team that reached the South Jersey Group 1 final. All-Group 1 pick Rob Cressman is explosive at the plate and on the mound, while the supporting cast brings a great deal of experience to the table.

16. Buena (17-10): Much like the team just above, the Chiefs return a great deal of experience from a squad that won the South Jersey Group 2 crown. Eight letterwinners are back, led by All-Group 2 outfielder Ken Miles. Look for the Chiefs to make another serious run.

17. West Deptford (20-9): The Eagles return just two starters, but this is a program that reloads year after year. They will be young in terms of varsity experience and may need some time to gel, but don't count them out of the mix. That would be a big mistake.

18. Delran (17-5): The defending Burlco Patriot champions feature one of South Jersey's better pitchers in All-Group 2 pick Jim Goodwin. Look for the Bears to follow his lead again in '09 and be in the championship mix.

19. Maple Shade (17-5): Last year's South Jersey Group 1 champions return eight letterwinners who know what it takes to win tight games. Pitching and defense are going to be there, but the Wildcats need to capitalize more on scoring opportunities to remain among the elite.

20. Clearview (14-10): Expectations are high as the Pioneers return eight starters, including All-Group 3 outfielder Scott Milden and second-team pick Shane Taylor. If they can establish a consistent leadoff hitter, look for this team to get it done in the Tri-Co Royal.

The first regular-season rankings will be Monday, April 13.

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