



Photo by Mike Kittrell/Call News

Cottage Hill slugger Ryan Sweatt

WARRIORS: Team 'loves to work'

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nate, Brazell noted.

"Dropping down to 2A, Area 1 with J.U. Blacksher and Elberta — we've got a lot of respect for J.U. Blacksher and the success that they've had in the history of the school and Elberta is a new school," he said. "Dropping down a classification isn't automatic that you're going to be successful. We're coming off an 18-11 record last year in 3A, Area 1. We lost five seniors but we'll have five seniors on this year's team. We'll be returning six starters and of course last year at times we started three eighth-graders.

"We're still going to be young in some spots but we have great leadership with our senior class. We do have something unique this year in that we have four guys who will contribute for us who are playing basketball so they'll be a little late getting out (for baseball). We have a very tough schedule early on. We're playing in the BayBears tournament and we open up with Mobile Christian on opening night, which was the 3A state champion. Then we have 7A Baker and 7A Theodore and in the second week we go to Montgomery and play 7A Lee and 6A Park Crossing."

Among the players Brazell will be counting on this season are: outfielder-left-handed pitcher Hunter Dixon. "He led our team in hitting last year and he has started each of the last three years. He hit .398 last year with 23 RBIs and he was 4-1 on the mound," Brazell said.

Senior Mike Evans, an infielder who has received multiple scholarship offers at the NAIA and Division II level, is another key player. He scored 32 runs and hit .325 last season. Senior utility player — "the ole Swiss Army knife, I call him," Brazell said — Grant Woodruff returns. He plays infield and pitches. He hit .329 last year with 24 RBIs. Ryan Sweatt will also play a key role. He catches, plays infield and pitches for the Warriors. He hit .358 last year with 22 RBIs.

Warrior girls get even younger

BY TOMMY HICKS
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There are many coaches in the area who suggest they have a "young team." It's doubtful many of those coaches have a roster as youthful as that of Drew Tranchina at Cottage Hill Christian.

And for Tranchina, it's becoming a trend.

"Last year we were young and some how we found a way to get younger this year," he said in assessing his 2019 Warriors. "I've got a couple of players coming back, led by sophomore Meagan Oliver. She's been All-Coastal honorable mention and she was honorable mention all-state last year. She was our shortstop starting in the seventh grade but she transitioned over to pitcher after we lost Brooke (Thompson) a couple of years ago."

Tranchina said he will be leaning on Oliver and her talents all season.

"Meagan, only being a sophomore, this will be her fourth year starting on varsity and this will be her second year of pitching every game for us," he said. "That's good to have your pitcher back. Brooke was good and losing her was big, but Meagan is doing well. Asking your shortstop to take over as your pitcher is a tough transition, but she's done it and she hasn't complained."

"Our left fielder Kiaedy Gavin is coming back. She is a good player who hit over .400 last year and covers a lot of ground in the outfield, she's really fast. Jessie Gregory plays third base for us. She's a sophomore who swings a big bat."

OK, so how young is the roster? "We've got a few who are returning but other than that we'll be young everywhere else," Tranchina said. "Basically we'll

be young everywhere. We've got one senior — Amber Pearson — who plays in the outfield. We're just trying to fill some spots with some young players who played last year.

"We started five middle schoolers last year and I think this year I will have at least five to start and maybe more."

That's correct; at least half of Tranchina's starting lineup will be filled by middle school players.

"I like it," he said. "The good thing about these young girls is they just go out there and play and compete. Last year we finished 9-11. We would go play McGill on their Senior Night, and we lost it in the bottom of the seventh. We played some good games and some bad. One night we played Bayside (Academy) and they run-ruled us and the next time we played them we beat them 15-0. "You're just up and down with those young girls and you just try to

get some consistency and get some team bonding going."

Tranchina said he is happy with the attitude and approach of this year's players and he believes, with some lucky along the way and avoiding any long-term inexperience issues his team will be competitive.

"With the region being different for us this year, hopefully that will help us some," Tranchina said of Cottage Hill's move down in classification from Class 3A to Class 2A. "(Area opponents) J.U. Blacksher is good and Elberta, I talked to a guy at their school and he told me they've got 40 girls out between the ninth and 12th grades; I've got 15 from seventh to 12th. That's a little different, but hopefully we'll be OK."

Tranchina put everything I perspective, saying, "We're just ready to get going."



Drew Tranchina