

Jackson expects 'good things' on the diamond this spring

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Jackson Aggies head baseball coach Dwain Dorman has been waiting for this day, waiting for this team to make its way to the varsity level, for quite a while. So naturally, he's pretty excited about getting the Aggies' season under way.

"I really like this group," he said of his 2019 team. "I've actually been aware of this group and watching this group all the way up through rec ball. They've had a lot of success coming up through Little League and Cal Ripken (league play) and all of that. I was already chomping at the bit to get them in the program and get them working. They are steadily blossoming, which is good."

That doesn't mean there aren't holes to fill in the Aggies' lineup, which there are, but with a mix of returning players and newcomers, Dorman said he's eager to see what the season will hold.

"I'm actually expecting some good things out of this crew," he said. "We lost a lot of leadership last year but we've got some guys that are coming back that have experience and have taken some leadership roles and are pushing the younger kids and really working with them. I'm expecting some good things out of this group this year even though for the most part we're going to be young. We have 13 sophomores but we've got some veterans with a lot of playing time coming back who are going to help us out."

Among the returning players for the Aggies is pitcher-third baseman-shortstop D.J. Powell, catcher-pitcher-third baseman-second baseman-outfielder Lane Rotch ("He's a really good utility guy and he really gets after it," Dorman said) and first baseman-pitcher Dyson James ("He came on last year in his first year as a starter on the varsity.")

Dorman said he has some sophomores and juniors who he believes will contribute. "I am really excited about putting them in the fire and seeing what they can do," he said. That list includes Luke Corley (P/1B/OF), Cooper Autry (P/1B), Williams Downey (C/P/1B), Kyle Handy (P/OF/INF) and Keyshawn Taylor (SS/2B). Dorman said Downey "is someone I'm expecting big things from," while Taylor "as a freshman late in the season last year kind of took over at shortstop and solidified us defensively as well as in the batting order."

The key to the Aggies' roster is its versatility.

"That's the thing with us this year that we didn't have last year is we have a lot of utility-type guys on the roster,"



Lane Rotch is "a really good utility guy" for the Jackson High baseball team.

Dorman said. "... I think of our entire roster there's maybe seven kids in the program that play just one place, either outfield or infield. And with the way the rules are with pitch counts, you've got to have more utility guys to be able to maneuver your lineup. It makes life tougher on me to try and put the pieces in the right spots, but it's good for us."

Dorman said a tough schedule awaits his team, which is good. "We've got our hands full," he said. "Last year after we got beat by Headland in the first round the comment I kept hearing from the kids was 'I want to get out of the first round.' Well, A, you've got to work at it from an individual standpoint and as a group, working toward that goal, and B, you've got to see quality teams and quality arms. I've challenged us this year. We're going to open up in Dothan this year on Feb. 18 in the Hits for Heroes, a big veterans tournament they put on each year. We're going to open up with 7A Northview of Dothan and then turn around and play 6A Eufaula. And we've got Daphne, Saraland and Citronelle on the schedule. Early on our schedule is going to be challenging, and you want it that way."



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