

Theodore outlook bright

BY ROBERT LADNIER
Sports Correspondent

After losing four seniors from last season's roster the Theodore baseball team is trying to pick up where it left off and be even better in 2019.

"We have eight seniors and 11 juniors and they are a pretty good group of kids," Theodore head coach Travis Williamson said. "They have played in some big-time ball games and are experienced in beating winning teams."

The Bobcats finished 24-13 last season and finished runners-up in Class 7A, Area 1.

"We had won the area the previous three years," Williamson said. "Down the stretch our pitching was strong and our offense seemed to put it together. I feel like our pitching may be better this year and all-around we have more depth."

Senior center fielder-pitcher Hunter Tillman hit .355 in 2018, drew 34 walks and scored 53 runs.

"He is an explosive kid who in the

three previous seasons has 100 stolen bases," Williamson said. "He is dynamic."

Senior Brae Murphy hit .308 with three home runs and 25 stolen bases. "He came on late," Williamson said. "He is the quickest kid I have ever coached and he has a lot of power."

A pair of juniors — first baseman-pitcher Kendall Cribb (.387 BA; 3 HR; 43 RBI) and shortstop-pitcher Jordan Phelps (.342 BA; 32 RBI) — will be others expected to be strong contributors.

Phelps had a 5-3 record on the mound with 29 strikeouts and 3.00 earned run average.

"He is a do-it-all type of player," Williamson explained. "It doesn't matter what we ask him to do, he works hard. He runs the defensive infield and is a smart kid."

Until it proves itself, Williamson said pitching is still a question mark for the team. "We lost three of our top pitchers, but we have so many young guys who are coming up," Williamson said.

Defense could be a big strength.

"We return four seniors who will rotate in the outfield and we bring back all but our second baseman in the infield," Williamson said. "We are only filling one spot so I feel good there."

According to Williamson, Area 1 will once again be a challenge.

"Mary Montgomery has made some deep playoff runs, Alma Bryant almost made it to the semifinals last year and have a bunch coming back, Baker in on the verge of being back where they were and Davidson is a scrappy bunch who battles you tooth-and-nail," Williamson said.

Theodore will also face a tough non-area schedule this year.

"We always want to play quality competition to prepare us for the playoffs," Williamson said. "We have a great group of seniors and they get along, they are great in the classroom and are not discipline problems. I am excited about the work they have put in. I think they can do really good things if they keep working."



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