



The Mobile Christian baseball squad won the state title last year in Class 3A, but now the Leopards must step up and compete in Class 4A this spring. "We're going to get tested early on," said head coach Talley Haines.

LEOPARDS: Mobile Christian goes for another crown

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Haines said. "I really don't know what to expect out of our area this year. It seems like during the past six or seven years, our area changes, but we're kind of familiar with those teams and the changes. But with this (new) group of teams, we've never really competed against it'll be different for us this year."

What won't be different is the Leopards will face some tough out-of-classification opponents, most notably Cottage Hill Christian, Theodore and McGill-Toolen, to begin the season.

"We're going to get tested early on," Haines said.

Mobile Christian will counter the tough schedule and new classification by returning some key players from last year's championship team, along

with some younger players who will play varsity for the first time.

"We have a good mix of older, experienced players and when you mix that with young guys who haven't played varsity yet, sometimes those guys can bring some excitement to your team," Haines said. "They haven't been there before, but they're excited to be there, and I'm kind of excited to see how we can blend those two types of personnel on our team this year."

Most notable among the returning players are senior catcher Ethan Hearn, who signed with Mississippi State; senior pitcher-first baseman J. T. Lasorka, who has committed to Coastal Alabama Community College; and senior pitcher Hunter Redding.

"Hunter was one of our better players last year and he suffered a knee injury that ended his season," said

Haines. "But we're expecting big things out of him and he could play in college as well."

A couple of juniors — Chance Vaught (pitcher-outfielder) and Ethan McPherson (pitcher) — are expected to contribute this season.

"Chance has been working really hard and made a lot of improvements," Haines said.

Despite a strong returning group, Haines said there will be concerns, especially with the influx of young players.

"We're going to be inexperienced in the infield," he said. "We lost some good players from last year and while we're excited about having young players, we have to see what they can do. They played daily on a middle school level and now we get the chance to see how they can play on the varsity level."