

Lady Bobcats more seasoned

BY ROBERT LADNIER
Sports Correspondent

A young Theodore softball team from 2018 finds itself a year older and battle-tested as it enters the new season with higher expectations.

"We started six freshmen last year," Theodore head coach Michael Walters said. "We had a slow start, so I told them I would give them a chance. This year we have four seniors, three juniors and the rest are sophomores."

The Lady Bobcats finished 25-20 overall, 6-2 in Class 7A, Area 1, but just missed the playoffs after finishing third in the area.

This season the team will lean heavily on its offense. All-state senior catcher Tia Coleman hit .422 with eight home runs, 13 doubles and 44 RBI a year ago.

"If she just has an average year she will re-write most of our school softball records," Walters said.

Sophomore center fielder Mya Burns had 10 doubles, two triples, 25 RBI and stole 17 bases. "She sets the

table for everyone as our leadoff," Walters said. "She plays harder than anybody we have."

Another pair of sophomores — outfielder-catcher Ariana Crowley (3 HR, 20 RBI) and third baseman Mackenzie Garcia (.426 BA, 2 HR, 17 RBI) — will add to the arsenal.

"We always hang our hats on hitting," Walters explained. "We hit .300 as a team with 25 home runs and 92 stolen bases."

Defensively, sophomore Cassie Barkley returns at shortstop. "She did a great job for us filling in for an injured player last season," Walters said.

Faith Taylor, who transferred in from Long Beach, Miss., after previously living in Theodore, will be very versatile. "She plays everywhere and she can fly," Walters said.

On the mound, senior Madison Harris will be the key after going 8-2 with a 2.74 earned run average with 65 strikeouts in 79 innings pitched.

"We will live and die with Madison," Walters said. "She always battles and

gives us the best chance to win."

Junior pitcher Brooke Lawton will also be available. "She pitched a lot last year, going 6-4 with a 3.50 earned run average," Walters said. "We expect bigger things this year."

Walters said there is no easy "W" in the area.

"Baker is always used to winning, Mary Montgomery and Alma Bryant are tough, while Davidson snuck up on some folks," Walters insisted. "It is a dogfight every time you play one of those teams."

According to Walters, the turning point last season was against Alexandria in the Baker tournament, when the team began to play more aggressively on the bases.

"We run the bases well and we work hard to steal," Walters said. "We love to hit-and-run. They have taken to it, they know the count and when to take, and when I send them they never question me."

"We have got to put pressure on you to win. We can't out-talent you so we have to out-work you."

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