



2016 Lady Eagle softball team

Five Lady Eagles return in 2016

By MIKE COURSON
The Lady Eagle softball team put up great numbers with 18 wins last year but ultimately missed its goal of qualifying for the state tournament. This season, expectations will again be high as Coach Jason Duvall returns for a second season with five core players also returning.

"We have a good group," Duvall said. "Of course with the pitcher (Allison Panning) coming back and Katie (Shafer) catching, it should be pretty good. We're moving some kids around to fill in some positions. I have some young kids who will be playing, and some kids who don't have a lot of experience but have a little and will be counted on to play."

The junior Panning played in all 21 games last year. She hit a respectable .309 but did most of her damage in the circle. Panning threw 93.2 of the 115 innings played last year, striking out 119, walking or hitting 27, and allowing just 58 hits. She returns with a paltry 1.20 ERA.

"She said softball may be something she wants to do in college and she's put a little more effort into it," Duvall said. "She's done pretty well in the weight room. With Coach (Ashley) Cahoon out there, she's dealt with pitchers, and that will give her a little more individual time with her, and we're developing another pitch or two so we'll be working on that throughout the season."

I think she's ready to go and is excited. That will be a big plus for our team."

Shafer, a senior, returns as the other half of the battery behind the plate. Playing in 21 games last year, Shafer finished third on the team with 25 hits and second with six doubles. Her 15 runs driven in were second-best on the squad.

Duvall returns some more firepower in seniors Mattie Shafer and Laura Standlee and junior Brittney Beck. Last season, Standlee paced the Lady Eagles with 37 hits and a .578 average. Her 31 runs scored were second-most on the team.

Beck batted .423, driving in 11 runs and coming around to score 27 times. She had three doubles on the season. Mattie Shafer hit .333 with 22 runs scored.

"We lost a couple big sticks but I think Katie and Mattie will do really well," Duvall said. "Brittney has the opportunity to hit the ball well. As far as hitting, we're not too bad. We'll still be using bunts here and there in spots. I have three or four coming back who hit out of the left side so we'll utilize that some too. The other girls in there will be good moving runners and that's what their jobs will be."

Ellinwood graduated some of its most potent power. Danae Patten took a .564 average with her, and Delaney Beckwith batted .450 last season

with a team-high four home runs. Tawny Arndt hit .404 last season with a pair of home runs.

Beckwith was also a secondary arm in the circle, throwing 21.1 innings with a 6-0 record and 2.62 ERA. Duvall said Mattie Shafer may get some innings in the circle, and freshmen Kaitlyn Pohlman and Lauren Petz may also throw some innings.

"We're hoping to have the opportunity to do that," said Duvall. (Mattie's) not a pitcher-pitcher, but she's done it before and can throw strikes. And we have some younger ones we're going to start working with."

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The 2016 Ellinwood tennis team is, from left: Lake Lyman, Eric Jones, Alex Robl, Keaton Robl, Jacob Kasselmann, and Coach Mike Fortkamp. Not pictured: Dylan Elsen.
(photo by Mike Courson)

Fortkamp takes over Eagle tennis squad

By MIKE COURSON
The Eagle tennis team went without a state qualifier for the first time in a long time last season. With a small roster and a new coach, Ellinwood is looking to change that in 2016.

First-year coach Mike Fortkamp has been out of the coaching game for a while. He played all four years in high school and coached boys' and girls' teams in Colby for two years before taking a long break. With three boys of his own on the middle school squad, he's ready to throw his hat back in the ring.

"I'm looking forward to developing some young talent into good

tennis players," Fortkamp said. "I look forward to seeing some kids turn the corner with their skill and taking their game to the next level."

Marc Waite had been a mainstay on the Eagle tennis team before graduating last May. He was a three-time state qualifier. His absence opens the door for a new leader and Fortkamp may have found that already in junior Eric Jones, one of the returners from last year.

"We have a good group of boys this year," said Fortkamp. "I am already seeing one of them as a leader, and that is Eric. He gets the rest of our team fired up and

motivated for practices and drills. You can tell he really wants to improve his game and take it to the next level."

Senior Dylan Elsen also returns as a varsity player from a year ago. He will likely team up with Jones to play No. 1 doubles for a second-straight season. "Dylan just started practicing with us recently," Fortkamp said on March 23. "I see Dylan and Eric having a great time playing doubles."

Senior Alex Robl played No. 2 singles last season. He will likely be in the mix for the No. 1

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