

Lady Lions looking for fourth-straight trip to state

By MIKE COURSON
Three-straight softball appearances have made the Lady Lion softball team one of the best in the tough Central Kansas League. This season, with the loss of four big seniors who played a key role in that run gone, Lyons will have to fight extra hard to reach the post-season.

"I don't know if we'll be a powerhouse like we have in the past," said Coach Marlin Clark. "I think we'll have more finesse hitting and have to do some different things."

Gone are Brenna McClure, Brooke Johnson, Lauren Barker, and Deanna Lutschg. McClure, Johnson, and Barker each played in all 24 games for the Lady Lions last year, and Lutschg returned from an injury to play in 10 games.

That group of girls occupied three infield spots on a nightly basis. Along with that defensive help, the group drove in 59 runs and accounted for 89 of the team's 226 runs scored.

"I think we could really miss Brenna and her leadership," Clark said. "That's the thing Brenna really brought to us the last couple years, also she



The Lady Lion softball team is, front row from left: Alexis Villanueva, Ruth Pineda, Jessikah Smith, Sarah Denton, and Logan Griffith. Back row: Fiona Jaime, Marisol Diaz, Morgan Michaelis, Laura Pineda, Ashlee Tingle, and Bailey Hollinger.

(photo by Vickie Folck)

was a nice leadoff hitter who got on base half the time. That was nice."

Who is back? Softball revolves around pitching and Lyons returns its two pitchers from last year's 18-6 season. Senior Laura Pineda threw 85.2 innings last year, finishing the season at 11-4 with a 1.31 ERA. She struck out 68 and walked 14.

Junior Ruth Pineda threw the other 55 innings for the Lady Lions. She finished with a 7-3 record and a 2.29 ERA. She struck out 43, walked 28, and hit eight

batters.

"Laura looks like she's a little stronger so far," said Clark. "I think Ruth has a little more control now than she had last year. If they keep working on it, I think we'll be okay with our pitching."

Offensively, Lyons returns its top bat in senior Morgan Michaelis, who earned all-state hitting honors last year with a .513 average. Michaelis led the team in hits (40), RBIs (27), doubles (6), and also had three home runs and 34 runs scored. Laura Pineda also

has a power bat with a team-high five home runs last year. She batted .347 with 26 RBIs and 24 runs scored.

Two other starters return to the field. Senior Ashlee Tingle played in 23 games last season, finishing with a .365 average and three doubles. She scored 19 runs, drove in 15 more, and was third on the team with seven stolen bases.

Junior Fiona Jaime played as an outfielder in all 24 games last season. She batted .238

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Lyons softball 2016

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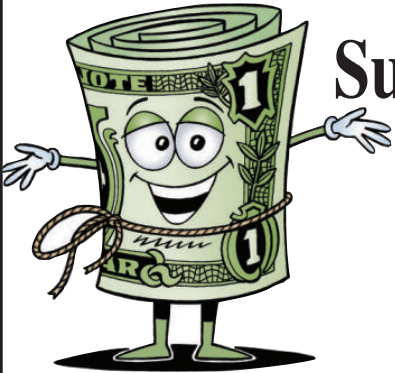
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