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Trojan Baseball Returns To Defend Conference Title

Tracy Hinsz
Sports Writer



The Barnesville Trojan baseball team is coming off its first ever Heart O' Lakes Conference baseball title, looking for a chance at repeating in 2018.

Barnesville finished with a 16-5 overall record, going 9-3 in the HOL conference, including a sweep of the Perham Yellow Jackets on the final day of the regular season to win the title outright. The 16 victories also set a school record for wins in a season, Barnesville's fifth season as a varsity program.

Returning to coach the Trojans this season is Phil Trowbridge, the only coach in the program's history. Trowbridge has an overall record of 54-37, including his first conference title, while leading his team to their best record in program history. Assisting Trowbridge for the 2018 season will be Junior Varsity coach Stacy Martz and Junior High coach Nathan Strand, both entering their sixth season as well. Volunteer coaches include Zac Anderson, Craig Samuelson, David Ernst, Jack Lien and Alex McIntyre.

Barnesville will have to overcome some big losses to graduation, including Joey Roste, HOL Conference Pitcher of the Year who holds the record for most wins in a season. Other big losses are starting second basemen Cole Tharaldson, third basemen Brandon Holte and pitcher/outfielder Brad Hochhalter. The leadership on and off the field that those four players represented will need to be replaced in order for the team to be successful in 2018.

However, the cupboard is not bare as the Trojans return some stellar talent at many positions. Brady Tweeton is tied for most career pitching wins and also plays shortstop and catcher. Tweeton was voted to the HOL All-Conference



Members of the Barnesville Trojan baseball team are, left to right, back row - Jack Trowbridge, Jalen Plath, Brady Tweeton, Gabe Dent, Kellen Hinsz; middle row - Nolan Rick, Matt Samuelson, Caleb Ott, Connor Morse, Blake Anderson, Matt Haugrud, Joseph Brown; front row - Tate Shellito, Caleb Stetz, Garrett Schaefer, Brady Martz, Jackson Wahl, Dustin Eaton and Chase Brenner. Not pictured is Adrian O'Brien, Nick Aadland and Sam Askegaard.

team in 2017.

Center fielder Brady Martz will patrol the outfield and lead the offense again this season. He tallied a .394 batting average, scored 26 runs and stole 21 bases, while earning HOL All-Conference honors.

They will be joined by two honorable mention, HOL All-Conference players in first basemen Jack Trowbridge and pitcher/shortstop Chase Brenner, who finished with a 1.91 ERA on the mound last season. Adding in Caleb Stetz, who started five games on the bump and went 3-0 with a 1.47 ERA, gives Trowbridge reason for

plenty of optimism for the upcoming season.

"We lost some talented players to graduation, but return four seniors that have had a lot of experience playing on the varsity level the last few years," said Trowbridge. "Seniors Brady Tweeton and Brady Martz have had outstanding careers and earned Heart O' Lakes All-Conference awards in 2018. Seniors Jack Trowbridge, honorable mention All-Conference, Caleb Stetz, along with junior All-Conference honorable mention athlete Chase Brenner, gives us a solid nucleus of players to build around this season. We will need to find some new

players to fill some big shoes, but we have the players that can do just that. Now is their chance to step up and shine."

Players hoping to earn a spot and contribute to the 2018 squad include seniors pitcher/infielder Jalen Plath, and infielder Garrett Schaeffer, with junior outfielder Kellen Hinsz, figuring into the mix. Sophomores itching to get their shot include Matt Samuelson, third base; Connor Morse, pitcher, first base and outfield; Jackson Wahl, catcher and infield; and Caleb Ott, pitcher and first base. Both Hinsz and Ott are looking to return to form after

suffering ACL injuries last spring, negating much of their baseball seasons.

"We have a talented group of players that will fight for playing time, filling roster spots vacated by graduations," stated Trowbridge. "We will look to play whoever gives us the best chance to win on a daily basis. Jalen Plath and Garrett Schaeffer are looking to make their mark in their senior season, while Kellen Hinsz is hoping to return from an injury. Sophomores Matt Samuelson, Connor Morse and Jackson Wahl had great success last year and over the summer and want to contribute to the varsity team as well, while Caleb Ott also returns from an injury. Competition is a good thing and we will have plenty of that with the hopes that it pushes all our players to their fullest potential, which makes our team better.

"We hope our returning starters can mesh and get our newer players up to speed as quick as possible. Their experience combined with our youthful potential should give our offense the chance to be the most potent we have had in our program's history. We hope to combine that with solid pitching depth to push for another HOL Conference title and possibly a Section championship, as that is our goal every year."

Captains for the 2018 baseball season will be Brady Tweeton, Brady Martz, Caleb Stetz and Jack Trowbridge.

Trowbridge believes that the HOL Conference is wide open and every team has a legitimate chance to win the title this season. He also believes the Section 8AA title is wide open, too.

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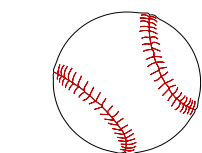
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