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Hawley Softball Motivated And Ready For Season To Start

Marc Ness
Sports Writer



The Hawley Nuggets softball team members are, left to right, front row-Abby Rux, Emily Tjaden, Rudee Hockett, Marissa Thompson, Courtney Bjerke, Elle Hastings, Tess Haugrud; middle row-Kendra Peterson, Kaylie Crabtree, Kylie Crabtree, Addi Dauner, Grace Fleming, Makenzie Halvorson, Paige Blakeway, Jada Thomson, Grace Bjorndahl, Andreanna Sander; back row-Jaycee Schmidt, Makayla Weiss, Hannah Johnson, Madison Balsdon, Taylor Corneliusen and Madi Walker.

While most people are shoveling inches and feet of snow from their driveway, the Hawley Lady Nuggets softball players are on their feet, working hard and wondering when they get to practice outside.

"It has been tough," Head Coach Peter Wolin said. "The girls are working hard and having fun and staying focused, but it is hard when we have frozen ground with snow caked on top of it."

The team has four top seniors that will help lead the way for the Nuggets: Makayla Weiss, Marissa Thompson, Jaycee Schmidt and Tess Haugrud. These girls are not only known for their excellent defense, they can also hit the cover off the ball.

The excellent defense continues around the horn with shortstop Makayla Weiss, who makes all the routine plays look easy and the hard plays look even easier. She is an excellent hitter as well and will hit at the top of the order. Makayla batted .347 with three doubles and two triples and also swiped six bags. The hard-working shortstop also led all Nuggets in runs scored with 25.

At second base will be Jaycee Schmidt. She appeared in 12 games for the Lady Nuggets, is good with the glove and is a very smart player. She knows where she needs to be on every play and continues to improve with the bat. Look for her to put up solid numbers for the Nuggets again this year. Jaycee has an eagle eye at the plate and was tied for first in walks with nine in only 37 plate appearances.

Senior Marissa Thompson can get to just about every ball that

is hit anywhere near her. Her instincts and long legs allow her to track down balls that nobody else could get to. Marissa had an excellent year at the plate batting .398 with an on-base percentage of a whopping .508. She added the element of speed into her game as well, stealing 13 bags to lead the team.

Tess Haugrud has really been swinging the bat hard. Really hard.

"She is really looking good," Wolin said. "Her bat speed is truly amazing to watch. She hit .300 for us last year and I think that will go up, she has tremendous power. Tess will do

some of the catching duties, and when she is not behind the plate she will be in the lineup as an extra hitter. Tess had three triples last year and it would surprise us at the Sports Preview to see her hit five homers this season."

Joining Thompson in center will be junior Courtney Bjerke in right and eighth grader Kaylie Crabtree in left. Both girls get great jumps on the ball and play excellent defense. Courtney hit .345 for the Nuggets and continues to improve each season. Kaylie put up crazy good numbers on JV last season and this past summer, so look for her to continue developing.

Addie Dauer will be behind the plate for the Lady Nuggets along with senior Tess Haugrud. Addie got to play a lot last year as an eighth grader and batted .339 with 11 RBI and six steals. She has a strong and accurate arm and plays excellent defense. As only a freshman, expect to hear her name a lot this year and in the future.

Playing the hot corner for the Nuggets will be Kaylie's twin sister Kylie.

"Both twins are so fun to watch. They are so fluid with the ball transfer ... it is just one motion," Molin said.

First base will be split between the team's top pitchers. Emily Tjaden and Abby Rux will switch in and out at first. Both players are good with the bat and the glove. Emily is a sophomore and

Abby is a freshman. Don't let the young age fool you, however, both players can bring it.

Not only can Emily and Abby bring it, they can also throw it. Emily is a hard-throwing right-hander who can hit her spots and causes Addie's mitt behind the plate to pop. Emily brings an extremely competitive and positive outlook to the pitcher's circle.

"Both girls are even better this season," Wolin said. "They are throwing hard and working on new pitches. They are both bulldogs on the mound."

Abby led the pitching staff with an ERA of 2.51 and tallied 71 strikeouts over 67 innings pitched. Emily wasn't very far behind with a 2.93 ERA and 61 Ks over 67 innings. Emily led the staff in wins with eight. With another year under their belts look for those numbers to improve in 2018.

Both girls can hit the ball as well. Emily batted .386 with five doubles, one triple and one home run. She also swiped 10 bases for the Lady Nuggets. Abby wasn't too shabby either, batting .375, with three doubles one home run, and both players tied with 17 RBI.

Freshman Rudi Hockett will get some time as well. She is super tall and very smart and athletic. She will play some third and first base and is swinging the bat well in early spring.

The girls' team had a great

summer winning the tournament and is now building on that momentum into this year.

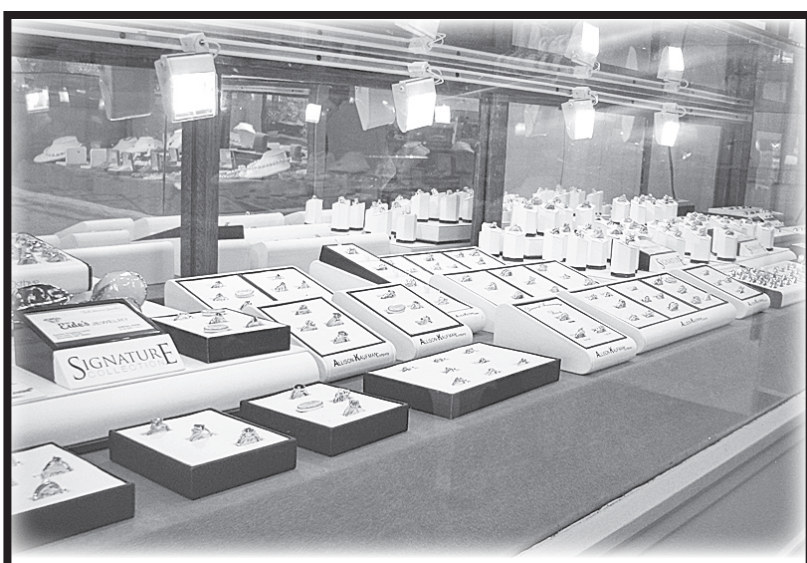
"The girls really played well and put together a great run last summer, it was really fun to watch them mature into a confident team," Wolin said.

The team would like to take the conference championship this season as one of their main goals. The team came up short the last two years taking second both times. The teams to beat are DGF, Barnesville, Perham and an improving Frazee team.

When asked what it will take for this team to be successful this season, Wolin said, "I think

if we can keep focus, play the kind of defense we all expect and continue to blister the ball, I think we should have a very good season.

"One thing is for sure, these girls are motivated and are all-in and it will be a really fun season."



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