

Niedens takes over as head coach in Lyons

Lyons baseball 2018

By MIKE COURSON
 The Lyons baseball team will look to a new coach to return to powerhouse status in 2018. The Lions went to state in 2013 and 2014 under then-coach Larry Kirkhart, who stepped down after seven years with both of his kids graduating from LHS.

Adam Niedens, an assistant under Kirkhart for the past six seasons, moves to the top of the dugout steps for the 2018 campaign. The move back to a winning season could be a difficult one for an inexperienced Lyons team that features just two returning starters and five varsity players. The Lions are looking to improve upon just four wins in 2016 and a 7-14 2017 season.

"We are a very inexperienced group this year," Niedens said. "We will need to do every little thing right for us to be successful. We are working very hard at this and our goal is to become a better baseball team and program

each and every day." Niedens will be without the heart of his hitting order from a year ago. Tyler Edwards, Riley Kirkhart, and Nathan Robl occupied spots 2-4 in the batting order and also played key defensive roles in the infield, on the mound, and behind the plate. "Tyler was our ace on the mound by far and Nathan caught every game unless he was pitching," said Niedens. "Riley was shortstop every game and would pitch in relief."

Edwards led the team in batting last year, and Robl, Kirkhart, and Justin Oberle all batted over .300.

Leading the returners will be senior Brayden Moore, who will bounce back between third base and pitching. Moore struck out 10 and allowed 17 earned runs in the 16 innings recorded on max-preps.com last year.

Moore will likely be joined on the mound by senior Jonathan Gomez,



Senior Brayden Moore will be one of the leaders for the 2018 Lyons baseball team.

(photo by Vickie Folck)

juniors Peyton Schwerdtfeger, Chris Goans, and Dakota Precopio, and sophomore Carlos Valerio.

With four of his top-five pitchers by innings gone to graduation, Niedens will need some relatively new arms to perform.

That applies elsewhere

around the diamond. Senior Wendell Scobee will likely take up action behind the plate. Procopio and Schwerdtfeger will vie for a spot at first base. Senior Hugo Fuentes will likely play at second base,

March 27	HOISINGTON
April 3	@Hesston
April 10	@Nickerson
April 17	HALSTEAD
April 20	@Kingman
April 24	@Hillsboro
April 27	HAVEN
May 1	@Smoky Valley
May 4	PRATT
May 8	LARNED
May 17-18	Regional TBA
May 24-25	State

and Valerio will take up the other middle infield spot at short.

Junior Ethan Saenz will fill in for Moore at third when Moore is on the mound, and Goans, Jonathan Gomez, and Aaron Gomez will likely make up the outfield.

"We will have a lot of guys stepping into roles they aren't accustomed to, and if we are going to have any type of success, they

are going to have to step up," he said. "Can we get the job done that is necessary to help us win games? That'll be the deciding factor in a lot of ball games this year."

A big difference in the schedule this year is the absence of perennial powerhouse Independent in the season-opener spot. Instead, the Lions played host to Hoisington on April 27.

Lyons golfers continue to improve

By MIKE COURSON
 A young Lyons High golf team made major strides last year, and the goal is continue those strides in 2018. Second-year coach John Cannon has back three varsity starters to help with that effort.

"We're still kind of rebuilding," he said. "Most of my players either started learning last year or right before. John Smith is the only one who really has any real experience. We're continuously building the program. We have a lot of young kids again - a lot of freshmen who have never played."

The sophomore Smith will continue to lead the team with the most experience. Juniors Irlick Moreno and John Villanueva saw plenty of varsity action as well in 2017.

"We really big gains," Cannon said. "John Smith got hurt last year so only participated in a few tournaments last year. Irlick and John Villanueva have

done really well. Villanueva has a done a great job. He played a lot over the summer and his ball striking has gotten exceptionally better.

"They made great progress last year. Both Moreno and Villanueva dropped their scores by about 30 strokes so I'm pretty pleased with that."

In a rebuilding year, winning is not always the goal. Battling in a tough Central Kansas League makes it easier to focus on becoming better golfers.

"We're in a really tough league with a lot of good golfers," Cannon said. "Hesston is going to return with a lot of kids. Larned should have a good golf team."

"For us, we don't necessarily worry about that. We're just working toward personal and program goals, trying to get better and trying to hit the ball more consistently in the right direction with better shot making."



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