

# As always, Honeybees aim for state crown

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Only a rules violation stopped Baker from competing in the Class 7A softball tournament last season.

The Honeybees (46-12) self-reported a rules violation during the South Regional tournament and as a result they were unable to move on to the state tournament. But to hear head coach Tony Scarborough tell it, a state championship is always on the minds of his players.

"That's our goal, to win state," he said. "We don't always win it, but that's our goal. We had five really good seniors graduate last year, but we have a pretty good nucleus coming back."

Among that group is four returning seniors. Scarborough said hitting will be the Honeybees' key strength and the pitching will also be pretty good.

"We had three good pitchers coming back, but one of them, Leslie Baxter (an All-State cross-country performer) is going to concentrate on running track this year," he said. "She was one of the top cross-country runners (in the state) in the fall. I hate to lose her, because she's a great kid, and I think she's going to do well in track."

Scarborough still has Caitlin McRee and Helainna Lonveree, the two returning starting pitchers. There



Caitlin McRee, starting pitcher and power hitter, will again be a leader for the Baker Honeybees this spring.

is also another pitcher returning, Bailey Murphy.

With 18 players on the varsity, there's no issue with depth for Baker. But Scarborough said the key to his team's success will be strong pitching.

"If the pitching continues to improve, that's the main thing," he said.

"I think we have some good pitchers coming back and you always hope everybody gets a little bit better."

Another player coming back is junior Katelyn Hutchinson, who hasn't played since her freshman season because of a severe knee injury.

"She wasn't supposed to even play anymore, but she's going to be our shortstop," said Scarborough. "Her sister Kristen (a sophomore) will probably be in the starting outfield for us. She's going to be another power hitter, I believe also."

In addition, there is catcher Jill Robinson whose father Scarborough coached in football years ago, as well as third baseman Lauren Lindsey.

"Along with McCree and Murphy, they (Robinson and Lindsey) are going to be power hitters," Scarborough said. "We're going to have a little bit more power this year than normal."

Scarborough said he is confident his team will be ready for another deep playoff run, so much so, he can't wait until the season opener, a road game against Spanish Fort scheduled for Feb. 20.

"I feel that we're going to be pretty good," he said. "I'm just ready for the season to get going. We've got a lot of good hitters, and as I said before, if the pitchers do what they need to do we should be in pretty good shape."

## HORNETS: Baker baseball players are 'mentally tough'

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Singley (pitcher-outfielder).

Other players who Minto said he feels can make an impact include senior catcher-outfielder Max Mangum and junior pitcher-third baseman Ethan Webber.

"We're very versatile, and that's in regards to the depth that we were speaking about, guys who can perform well at multiple positions," Minto said.

"It gives us some chances and opportunities to move kids around. We just really have a deep roster. We have kids that are talented and can play multiple positions. That alleviates some problems for us because kids aren't stuck in the same spot."

The major concern Minto has about this year's team is it's in a very tough area with Alma Bryant, Theodore, Mary G. Montgomery and Davidson. The five-team area is sure

to provide a lot of competition during the season.

"This area is very talented," he said. "We have a lot of good teams, a lot of good players and a lot of good coaches around this area that have always provided good competition. Historically, it's been very deep, and we had some very talented teams in the past. This area is definitely one of the best in the state. We get day-in and day-out competition, which is what we love."