



Softball

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happy for our girls that their hard work is paying off with some attention from college coaches, but we have to put it all together on the field if we are going to meet our goals.”

Coming up one game short a year ago has been a driving force for Barham and his team in the offseason. The fourth-year coach said he is very pleased with the way his players worked to get stronger and better in the offseason and expects that to translate to the on-field product. However, he put together a challenging non-region schedule that will be challenging, but hopefully pay big dividends when region play gets underway.

“Coming off a successful season we wanted our schedule to be rugged in non-region play,” Barham said. “I know we can hold our own and be competitive. Even if we come out on the losing end in some of those games, we’ll grow and it will help us in the games that matter.”

“We only play one team out of region that isn’t in Class 5A or 6A, so simply put, we tried to schedule in a way that will make us ready for the playoffs.”

Even with the talent and experience Barham has available, making the postseason and competing for a region championship will not be a walk in the park because of the region in which the Lady Cats compete. Purvis, Barham says, is a team coming back that will be really strong with a Jones College commit coming back in the circle. And, Sumrall and Poplarville will be tough as well.

“Purvis made a deep run last year and will likely have the best pitching we will see,” Barham said. “Sumrall returns seven seniors including their top pitcher and Poplarville will reload and be solid in the field and at the plate. So, I expect the region to be strong.”

Barham doesn’t have seven seniors like the Bobcats, but he has three that he believes he can lean on to lead the squad. Olivia Eubanks, Kayla Mazzocchi and Destiny Eubanks are returning starters and tremendous leaders for GCHS. Mix them in with juniors like Kat Garrett, Hannah Hillman, Tiana Caver (all returning starters) and sophomores CharLee Meadows and Charleigh Stewart and you have a good foundation. Throw in promising players who will be making the jump to varsity action and you can see why there is optimism around the softball complex.

“Getting leadership from all three of my seniors will be key,” Barham said. “We’ve grown up and learned how to win last season. We just need to put everything we’ve learned together and come out and compete every pitch, every game.”

GCHS got off to a great start in 2019, winning eight of their first ten games. Barham is hoping for similar good fortune this season. The Lady Cats got had a good opening day with a split in jamboree action at Ellisville. They claimed a win over Mize and competed well against Wayne County in those scrimmages. However, hey struggled in the first game that counted, losing their home opener Saturday against D’Iberville by a 7-0 margin. Cold bats were the issue in the loss to the Lady Warriors as the Lady Cats managed just a handful of hits and never got any momentum going in their favor. They followed that up



Photo by Russell Turner / Herald Staff

Senior Kayla Mazzocchi is shown connecting with a pitch in the Lady Cats’ home opener against D’Iberville. The Meridian Community College signee is one of several impact players returning this season. While the Lady Cats were unable to get their offense going in the loss to the Warriors on Saturday, they have a lineup that should be able to produce big numbers throughout the season.

with a loss to 6A George County on Monday, but Barham was much happier with the way his team competed against the Lady Rebels.

“I was disappointed with our energy level,” Barham said of his team’s performance on Saturday. “I thought we would come out with more excitement with it being the first game of the season.”

“The difference was in the details. They executed when they needed to and we didn’t. I thought we played much better against George County. We hit the ball much better, but just didn’t string together those hits and drive in runs when we were in good scoring position.”

Things don’t get any easier as up next will be a stretch that includes games with George County, Wayne County, South Jones and Picayune. They will follow that with a tournament in D’Iberville and a matchup with Gautier before getting into region play with their opener against Sumrall on the road March 10.

“George County and Wayne County are great tests for us early,” Barham said. “We follow that up with Picayune and South Jones and also play in three different tournaments.”

They will face powerhouse West Lauderdale, Pascagoula and Moss Point in tournament action at D’Iberville March 6-7, and take on Germantown and Petal at Jones College the following weekend. They also will compete in a tournament in Satsuma, Ala. later in March.

“I think we understand we aren’t where we need to be at this point,” Barham added. “I want to win, but I am more concerned about getting better in these early games.”

“We took positive steps against George County and I am confident we will get it going.”

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