

Tight schedule, year off present new challenges to Tide baseball

By Steven Slack
Special to The Reporter

The 2020 Edgerton varsity baseball team would have been littered with returning lettermen and proven contributors but the 2021 Crimson Tide are returning just three players with significant varsity experience.

Junior pitcher Peyton Lee joins seniors Drew Hanson and Braden Simmons as the Tide's only returning lettermen. Lee was a Rock Valley honorable mention as a freshman in 2019 and is Edgerton's only returning all-conference honoree.

"It's just so odd. There's so many kids I really don't know that much about because we missed an entire year," Coach Mike Gregory told the Edgerton Reporter. "It's an extremely unique situation but we get to play, and that's the

main thing here."

In order to fill out the varsity roster, Gregory noted that he "robbed" the junior varsity team where coach Russ Lietz is also trying to get a handle on his roster.

When Lietz asked his JV players who among them was a pitcher, too few players raised their hands.

"I told them, 'You're all pitchers until I tell you you're not,'" Lietz recounted.

Varsity baseball will be playing three games a week, making pitching rotations another challenge for Gregory. With three games being played every week, Gregory will be carefully watching players' pitch counts and very actively managing his bullpen.

Gregory does feel like he can have some peace of mind out with senior

transfer Konner Knauf patrolling center field. Knauf played infield for Stoughton in 2019.

"He's fit in very well," Gregory said. "He looks wonderful out there, and [center field] seems tailor-made for him. With his speed and athleticism, he covers a lot of ground."

Gregory is also hoping to see the speedy Knauf put the ball in play on the ground and then "wreak havoc on the basepath."

Many of these challenges are being faced all through the Rock Valley Conference.

"I'd have a hard time telling you who's going to be good in the league," Gregory said. "Everybody last year was going to be so senior-dominated and now those kids are gone...You're talking literally every team is rebuilding from JV...It's different."

With that in mind, Gregory hasn't set his sights quite as firmly on goals like regional championships or RVC titles as he may have in the past.

"We really haven't talked much about that at all. We're happy to be playing," Gregory said. "We're getting this opportunity after it was taken away. It gives you more energy, a little more bounce in your step...Let's just get better, play the game, have fun and battle."

Gregory noted that many of his players are currently practicing two sports at once.

"They're taking off the pads, coming down the hill and changing in the dugout," Gregory laughed. "I haven't heard one kid complain...That perspective of what's really important has changed a little bit."

Gregory knows that regardless of the challenging season and gratitude for the

season, the Crimson Tide is going to compete.

"We're still going out there and we expect to compete and battle every single game. That's not going to change," Gregory declared. "I think that fun nature is there, but when you cross the white lines, the competitive juices just start to flow."



Drew Hanson (12) will be the most experienced Tider on the diamond this spring. The senior may again return to first base but will definitely spend time on the mound for Edgerton.

Photo by Steven Slack



Junior Peyton Lee returns as one of only two players with experience on the varsity mound for the Tide. Lee was an honorable mention as a freshman in 2019.

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