

SPORTS

Young, talented Arcola baseball team ready to be outside

By Mike Monahan

ARCOLA – A young, but talented Arcola baseball team was to begin the season March 21 at Assumption against Central A&M. The season was scheduled to start March 14 at Salt Fork, but was canceled due to wet grounds. Arcola also was set to play Windsor/Stewardson-Strasburg at Windsor on March 22.

One thing that has affected the team is the fact they have not been able to practice outside. The baseball field, which is undergoing renovations, is not ready as well.

"We are very excited to get started," said Arcola coach Mike Phillips, who guided Arcola to an 8-9 overall and 6-4 in the Lincoln Prairie Conference last season. "Having only practiced inside I think the kids are getting a little stir crazy. Practices can get a little monotonous when we are doing the same thing day after day."

One big question mark is the health of Tanner Thomas, who has committed to Louisville and is a sophomore. Thomas suffered a hamstring avulsion and tendon rupture in a football game on Sept. 30 at Niantic in a 28-12 win over Sangamon Valley.

"We are hoping to get Tanner back in April," said Phillips. "I think he is making great progress with his rehab."

Thomas hit .564 with two home runs, 13 stolen bases. On the mound he had 99 strikeouts and 22 walks in eight appearances and an earned run average of 1.08 throwing 46 and a third innings. He was a unanimous first team all-LPC player.

The Purple Riders lost first team all-conference player Beau Edwards as well as Mark Truex and five other players.

Eight players are back from last season.

"That is big for us," said Phillips. "We gained a lot of good experience. Last year we started five freshmen and those five are a big part of this program. They will continue to build off what they accomplished last year."

With the fact they have not been outside comes the question of what positions players will play.

"We have a pretty good idea where kids will play, but not having been on the field yet makes it kind of tough to determine for sure who will play where," said Phillips, who is assisted by Jeff Thomas. "We have big gaps to fill on the left side of the infield, positions held by Edwards and Truex last year. We still have some kids still fighting for field time."

Arcola has not had a winning season since Jarod Kiger led the 2007 team to a 14-11

record.

"This year we have had several open gyms prior to the season starting that the kids took advantage of," said Phillips. "Our main focus there was getting their arms in shape and ready for the season. Once the season kicks off its 2-3 games per week. There is not much time for rest so our goal is to keep our arms healthy."

There are a total of two seniors, four juniors, five sophomores and five freshmen on the roster of 16.

"We are young again this year with 10 of the 16 being freshmen/sophomores," said Phillips. "Our baseball IQ continues to grow. Four of the five freshmen played travel ball during the summer. Jackson Griffith and Brevyn Whisman will be a big part of the lineup and will have the opportunity to contribute early. We have about a three year window where we will have a lot of kids coming up that have that baseball background playing over the summer, starting with this sophomore class."

The seniors on the team are Austin Kutz and Braden Shonkwiler. In 14 games Braden Phillips, a sophomore, is the second best player in RBI's with seven, while junior Tyson Lewis is second in batting average among the returners at .333.

As for what he hopes will be

the strengths of the team, Phillips said, "With being limited on what we have been able to do so far this spring, especially defensively, most of our focus has been hitting and pitching. With an indoor cage we have been able to take a lot of batting practice and our hitters have been able to see live pitching for a couple of weeks now. Defensively, we should be just as strong. We have a lot of talent and baseball minded athletes. By that I mean kids that play during the summer."

Pitching wise outside of Thomas the staff should be very deep.

"Based on what we have seen so far, I am extremely pleased with what we have so far on the mound," said Phillips. "We are about seven deep with those kids seeing significant mound time and two others are right there also. I have not really defined roles for all as far as starter, middle guy or reliever. Thomas, Jayden Henson-Stice (sophomore), Shonkwiler and Brevyn Whisman (freshman) are front runners as starters with Caiden Helmuth (sophomore), Phillips and Jackson Griffith (freshman) also thrown into the mix. It is real nice to know that we potentially have nine guys we can count on."

Arcola opens conference play April 3 against Heritage, coached by Arcola grad and

2023 Arcola Baseball Roster

Seniors

Austin Kutz, Braden Shonkwiler

Juniors

Gerardo Alanis, Anthony Garza, Wayne Humphrey, Tyson Lewis

Sophomores

Caiden Helmuth, Jayden Henson-Stice, Braden Phillips, DJ Stevens, Tanner Thomas

Freshmen

Brody Drake, Hunter Drake, Jackson Griffith, Brandon Lyons, Brevyn Whisman

2023 Arcola Baseball schedule

(home games in all capitals and games start at 4:30 p.m. unless noted)

March 27 at Marshall, March 30 at Hoopston Area

April 1 PARIS, 10 a.m.;

April 3 HERITAGE*;

April 7 at Arthur-Lovington-Atwood-Hammond*;

April 8 MARTINSVILLE, 10 a.m.;

April 10 at Argenta-Oreana*;

April 12 SULLIVAN; April 14 at Blue Ridge*;

April 17 CERRO-GORDO/BEMENT*;

April 21 CUMBERLAND*;

April 24 at TBA;

April 25 at Neoga;

April 27 at Arthur Christian;

April 28 VILLA GROVE*

May 1 at Tri-County *(Kansas);

May 4 at Okaw Valley*;

May 8 DECATUR LSA*;

May 11 at Tuscola;

May 15-20 Class 1A regional, TBA

*-Lincoln Prairie Conference game

resident Jason Conn.

The Purple Riders don't have enough players for a junior varsity team, but Phillips

hopes a few innings can be played after the varsity game.

Arcola junior high track ready for the season

By Mike Monahan

ARCOLA – The Arcola seventh, which includes sixth graders, and eighth grade girls and boys track teams were scheduled to travel to Paris Mayo Wednesday in the first track meet of the season.

The seventh and eighth grade boys are coached by Steven Franco, while the girls are coached by Emily Stitt.

A total of 15 sixth and seventh grade girls are on the team along with seven eighth graders for a total of 22.

On the boys side they have 22 sixth and seventh graders as well as 11 eighth

graders for a total of 33.

The next meet is set for Tuesday at Cumberland at 4:30 p.m. followed by a home five team meet with Okaw Valley, Tri-County, Villa Grove and Shiloh.



Arcola Junior High Track Rosters

Sixth and Seventh grade girls

Maya Behrends, Aniah Campos, Breseida Condarco, Rory Drake, Olivia Gisinger, Stevee Griffith, Audrina Gonzalez, Kayla Hernandez, Averi Kutz, Kayla Lyons, Sofia Mora, Jazlyn Moreno, Scarlett Montano, Daniela Sadivar and Tenley Thomas

Eighth grade girls

Vanessa Azripe, Emma Edwards, Amayra Leal, Madalyn Lyons, Jackson Miller, Megan Miller and Emmalee Reel.

Sixth and Seventh grade boys

John Andriey Camisa, Maxwell Bales Turner, Laison Barron, Will Biggs, Alex Cortez, Levi Fifield, Jahel Galaviz, Jordan Gingerich, Blain Helmuth, Lucas Janes, Max Lyons, Sawyer Maxwell, Cooper McConnell, Liam Nichols, Sheya Patel, Trevin Plank, Brandon Sanchez, Jayden Smith, Ke' din Smith, Connor Truex, Ronnie Vega, and Brayden Williams

Eighth grade boys

Oliver Diaz, Angel Garcia, Eddie Garcia, Tony De La Garza, Joey Hout, Carson Jewell, Brody Phillips, Remi Roberts-McGeehon, Christian Rocha, Brian Sanchez, and A.J. Stevens

Arcola Junior High Track schedule

(home meet in all caps, all meets start at 4 p.m. unless noted)

Tuesday at Cumberland, 4:30 p.m.;

Thursday OKAW VALLEY, TRI-COUNTY, VILLA GROVE, SHILOH

April 3 at Arthur-Lovington-Atwood-Hammond;

April 6 TRI-COUNTY;

April 15 at Arthur-Lovington-Atwood-Hammond Invite, 10 a.m.;

April 18 at Tuscola;

April 19 at Argenta-Oreana;

April 22 ARCOLA INVITE, 10 a.m.;

April 24 at Sullivan;

April 27 TUSCOLA, UNITY; WINDSOR/STEWARDSON-STRASBURG

May 2 Junior High Okaw Conference meet at Tuscola;

May 6 at Class 2A sectional, at Effingham St. Anthony, 9 a.m.;

May 12-13 IESA Class 2A state meet at Eastside Centre in East Peoria, TBA

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