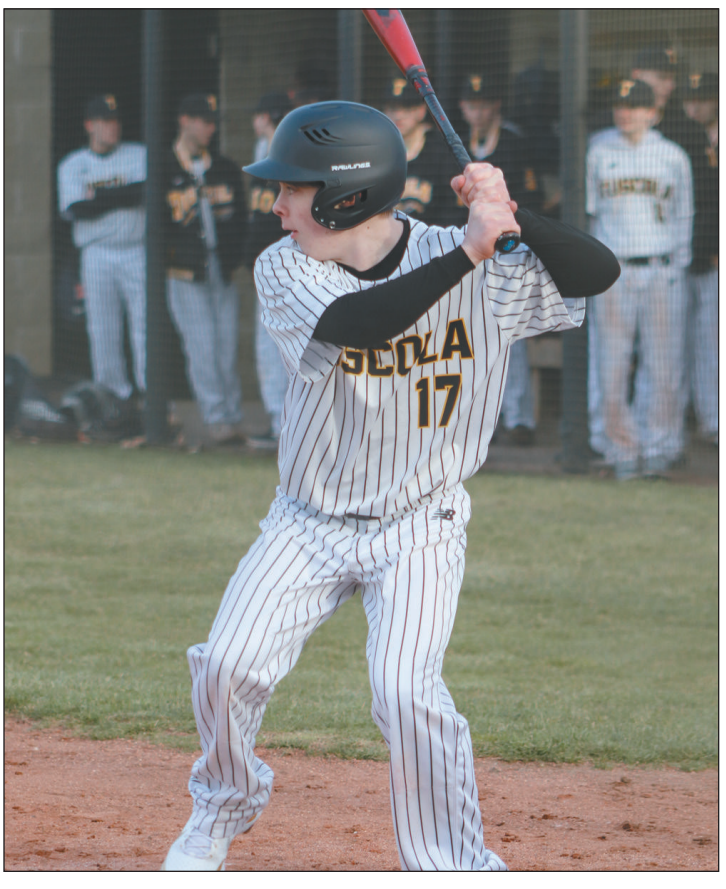


WARRIOR COLTON MUSGRAVE (6) gets ready to swing the bat during the game against Maroa-Forsyth on March 15. Tuscola lost 20-0. Photo by Tracy Hornaday.



Warrior Isabelle Wilcox (17) during the game against Maroa-Forsyth, on March 15. Tuscola won 6-5. Photo by Tracy Hornaday.



WARRIOR COOPER LYONS (17) shortly before hitting the ball during the game against Maroa-Forsyth on March 15. Tuscola lost 20-0. Photo by Tracy Hornaday.

Warriors baseball looks to younger players

By Lenny Sementi
Tuscola baseball only had two juniors on the roster a year ago. One of those left, and the team ended up with only one senior to lead the way. This is forcing new Warrior skipper and longtime assistant Caleb Englehardt to lean on his youngsters. Colton Musgrave returns as the starting catcher after setting up behind the dish for the past two seasons.

"In terms of personnel, we are fortunate to have one of the area's best overall hitters and defensive catchers in Colton Musgrave," stated the coach. "He has been a starter from day one of his career and that would have included his freshman year had it not been canceled due to Covid. We will look to Colton for leadership not only due to his talent, but he is also our only senior."

When asked about this year's squad, Englehardt responded, "We are very excited to get the season started. The guys have done a great job with offseason work and it is apparent that the returning varsity players have gotten much stronger and their game awareness has improved. That said, we are very light in terms of varsity experience, especially within our pitching staff. None of that can be used as an excuse. We have to elevate the expectations of our program and work extremely hard to get

where we were previously. I really admire how hard our young players are working and the positive attitude that they are bringing to the ballpark. That is a good step in the right direction."

Three third-year players will look to support Musgrave and will be the backbone of the squad. Austin Cummings, Isaac Halverson and Nate Thomason will be called on to be very versatile and play where they are needed. "Austin has emerged as one of our top hitters and also runs very well," Englehardt said. "Isaac and Nate both played a lot of outfield last year, gaining valuable experience and will also be relied upon to throw a lot of innings on the mound. Halverson would be considered the number one pitcher at this point."

Sophomore Jacob Waugh took over the shortstop position as a freshman and will be there again when he is not on the mound. Waugh had a strong first-year campaign and should be a big part of the Warriors batting order. JJ Reynolds is another second year that saw time on the diamond in the late season last spring. He will be at first base, most likely;

"Both guys will be anchors for us at their respective positions as well as two of our top pitchers. Another sophomore Cole McAllister has also shown

good potential offensively and will find a way into the lineup," Englehardt mentioned.

When asked about his freshman group, Englehardt responded with nothing but positive thoughts.

"Caiden Russo, Cooper Lyons, Clayton Neuner and Michael Reese have all been impressive not only for their ability but also for their positive attitudes and work ethic. All will see time on the pitcher's mound. Russo can play any of the infield positions and is the backup catcher. Reese is also capable of playing middle infield and catcher. Lyons and Neuner will be in the outfield when not pitching. Although it is difficult for freshmen at the varsity level, all of these guys will compete and embrace the steep learning curve ahead of them."


The youthful group took one on the chin in the opener, falling to Maroa 20-0. Tuscola gave up crooked numbers in the first three innings and never recovered. Halverson took the loss, working one and two-thirds innings. Neuner tossed one and third in relief and Waugh finished it off. Waugh was solid, tossing a goose egg on the board during his outing and striking out one. Cummings had the only hit of the game for the black and gold, going 1 for 2 on the day out of the leadoff spot. Waugh and Musgrave both reached on

a walk. "While the result was terrible, it was good to play a game and identify areas to prioritize as we look to improve. Maroa is an outstanding team, returning 6 starters from a 32-3 Final Four team last year," the coach commented. "They looked every bit the part of one of our area's best teams. Offensively they took a great line-drive approach and pressured our defense."

"Despite the box score, I was happy with Isaac Halverson's control and demeanor on the mound. He only walked one guy and did exactly what we asked of him, which was to deliver strikes. We just simply didn't make routine plays behind him with 7 errors. I was disappointed with our effort defensively and that will continue to be a major point of our work going forward."

"We have been working hard on hitting higher velocity in practice and that will hopefully pay off down the road as we get better with timing. A mindless "hit it hard" approach just doesn't cut it when you have pitchers carving up the corners of the plate and mixing in good sliders/curves. Hitting is something that must be done every day to improve and we will continue to push the right mindset."

SPRING CITYWIDE



April 21 and 22

Get a star on The Journal

SPRING CITYWIDE GARAGE SALE MAP

For \$20.00 you get a star on the map, your address, day and time of your sale, and a description of items.

Deadline for being included on the map is Thursday, April 13.

Map with sale locations and descriptions will publish April 19 in The Journal.

Address of sale:

Check days you will be open and print hours:

April 21 from _____ to _____

April 22 from _____ to _____

Description of items 15 WORDS OR LESS:
(more than 15 words will not fit in description box)

(not included in printed ad)

Name: _____

Phone# _____

Ck# _____

Credit Card Payment:

Card # _____

Exp date: _____

Billing Address: _____

Ad MUST BE PREPAID to be published. Mail in this form with your check or credit card information for \$20 to PO Box 170 Tuscola, IL 61953. Or drop off at our office during business hours. Mon and Thurs-Fri 8:30-4:30.

Tuscola Warriors softball springs forward

By Lenny Sementi
Tuscola's softball team hits full stride into the 2023 campaign this week with five games in six days after getting just one of five in this past week due to Mother Natures' cold spell. The group led off the year in exciting fashion with a come-from-behind 6-5 walk-off win in the bottom of the seventh inning. The Warriors will look to build on a Regional Championship squad from a year ago behind nine players that saw time on the varsity diamond a year ago, including 5 of the top 6 in the batting order.

Ella Boyer an Illinois State commit was strong at the plate for the black and gold a year ago. The senior led the squad in batting average (.556), RBIs (46), and HRs (10), earning her All CIC honors, All Area 1st team honors and was also selected All-State by the coaches association. She hit her first dinger of the year in the opener on a 2 for 3 evening. Isabelle Wilcox, a second Team All-State honoree and All CIC and All-Area performer, ended her year with a .486 batting average that included five hours and a team-best 7-triples.

Two other seniors, Makena Fiscus and Claire Meyer will also fill leadership roles for the Warriors. Fiscus set up behind the plate again after a solid junior season. Meyer will hit in the middle of the order and be a utility player in the field playing in both the infield and the outfield.

Gone to graduation from last season is over 150 innings on the mound and an All-CIC pitcher in Kerri Pierce. Wilcox will look to fill the void in the circle. She collected win number one on the year, giving up 5



ISABELLE WILCOX, Emily Czerwonka, Claire Meyer and Ava Boyer celebrate during the March 15 against Maroa-Forsyth. Tuscola won 6-0. Photo by Tracy Hornaday.

hits and 4 walks while striking out 7 in 7 innings of work. Joining her on the pitching staff this season will be juniors Katie Gibson and Addy Ring and a pair of freshmen, Cailin Munson and Bailey Taylor.

Ring patrolled the outfield grass and was a big part of the lineup a year ago, beating out bunts or driving the ball deep. Emily Czerwonka and Zoey Thomason are two other third year players that produced on offense a year ago. The duo collected All CIC accolades a year ago and were integral parts in the victory over Maroa. Czerwonka recorded the first hit of the year while going 3 for 3 on the evening. Thomason hit the ball hard all game and drove in the winning run in the bottom

of the seventh to secure the victory.

The sophomore class boasts a trio of players in Ava Boyer, Allyson Pettry and Emily Veach will be more than a supporting cast. Veach saw time in the outfield a year ago and Pettry spent some time on the base paths as a pinch runner. Boyer started off her freshman campaign as the Warriors leadoff and ended the year and started this season off in the same spot. She tied with big sister Ella in the HR column delivering 10 while posting a .495 batting average, scoring 54 runs. As a rookie, she made the biggest post-season haul of any first-year player in program history. Boyer was a Unanimous First Team All CIC Selection, a Third

Team All-Stater, First Team All-Area Herald and Review pick, and secured a Second Team All-Area News-Gazette spot.

The black and gold will look to a large and talented freshman class as the season progresses. Alaina Smith served as the designated player in the batting order against Maroa, while Munson entered the game as both a courtesy and pinch runner.

Bailey Taylor and Delaney Tyler will add to the battery. Taylor looks good in the early going in the circle and Tyler has seen time at both catcher and third base. Kayleigh Bales is another newcomer that has impressed in early practices.