

We love our Warriors!

Tuscola Warrior's baseball team eyes the future

By Lenny Sementi

Colton Musgrave laid the groundwork for the future of the Warriors. Englehardt's young squad was playing three freshmen in the starting lineup. Three sophomores ended on a high note earning a spot in the IHSA regional semifinal with an extra-inning win in their post-season opener against Tri-County.

Musgrave, a 1st Team All Central Illinois Conference performer for the second straight year and Blackhawk College commit, led the way at the year-end banquet collecting the

team's MVP and Highest Batting Average awards. The catcher hit .421 with 24 RBIs, 27 runs scored and 5 home runs while boasting a .969 fielding percentage.

The backbone of next year's team was a strong junior contingent. Nate Thomson who patrolled the outfield, played a shortstop and pitched some, ended the season with 3 home runs, 21 RBIs and 16 runs. JJ Reynolds the ace of the staff, struck out 31 in 33 innings of work and delivered at the plate with a pair of HRs added to his resume and also fielded above the

.900 plateau.

Austin Cumming swiped a team-best 15 stolen bases and landed just shy of .300 driving one over the fence. He also showed promise on the bump pitching for the first time in his high school career. Isaac Halverson was another third year that spent some time on the hill firing the pill for 17 innings when not playing first base.

Jacob Waugh is another arm in Englehardt's arsenal returning next season and will return to shortstop. The sophomore fielded at a .890 clip and hammered out 15 hits on the year de-

spite missing valuable time on the diamond due to injury. Another second year that came up big late in the season, hitting his first career HR and eating up innings in relief, was Aiden Devlin. Devlin, who secured the team's Most Improved award, should be one of the cornerstones next season.

A pair of first years, Cooper Lyons and Caden Russo, started and ended the year in the lineup. Both came up big at times at the dish and threw the second and third most innings on the hill as starters in the pitching rotation. They also were piv-

otal on defense, with Russo holding down the hot corner and Lyons covering the grass in center field. Lyons collected the Warrior Spirit award going above and beyond practice time, spending more than a few late nights on his own in the batting cages.

"From the beginning of our open gyms in January, I had a simple stated goal of making improvements every day as a team. I knew coming into the year that we were facing some adversity: youth/inexperience, lack of reps, physical strength versus our opponents with

junior/ senior heavy rosters, declining numbers in participation while also rebuilding a connection with community and developing positive momentum," stated Englehardt. "We have greatly improved in all of those areas. Despite a difficult record in the win-loss column, I am pleased with the progress that we made and I believe that in future years our increased experience, strength and numbers will contribute to getting this program back to its rightful spot as one of the better ones in the area."

Tuscola Warrior's softball is 'senior strong'

By Lenny Sementi

The high school class of 2023 endured more and less than any other class in recent history. Tuscola's softball elder statesman didn't let the disappointment of lost time derail their success. The Lady Warriors extended the program's 20 wins in a season to double digits posting a 21-11 record overall despite a learning curve experienced early in the season.

This year's seniors missed their entire freshman campaign due to COVID, dealt with a shortened sophomore season for the same reason and mother nature stole 10 games from them as juniors. All that and a few holes to fill led to some growing pains. All Stater's Ella Boyer and Isabelle Wilcox and their senior classmates Makenna Fiscus, Hailey Downs and Claire Meyer led the way for a team that had a trio of freshmen in the lineup at the end of the season.

Boyer and Wilcox didn't miss a beat, both landing on the 1st Team All Central Illinois Conference squad as well as a 1st and 3rd team All-State nod, respectively. The duo shared the team's MVP award at the post-season banquet donating in more than a few ways.

Boyer a Illinois State commit also secured the Batting Average Award posting a .516 average that included 11 home runs, 48 RBIs, 50 runs scored and 27 stolen bases. She was part of 14 double plays from her shortstop position. Wilcox, a Lindenwood University commit, ended her year with a .459 batting average, driving home 42 runs



Tuscola 2023 varsity softball team. Photo by Rachel Ray

while scoring 45 runs. She tied with Boyer at the top of the stolen base list, swiping 27 bags. She resided in the circle most nights, firing a team-best 125 innings and striking out 103 batters along the way to 15 wins. Fiscus was behind the dish for all but one game and hit .309 on the season, while Meyer showed up at both the hot corner and in the outfield, donating 10 RBIs and 16-runs scored.

Juniors Addyson Ring, Zoey Thomason and Emily Czerwonka started every game and will be the backbone of next year's squad. Czerwonka took

home All-Conference honors producing 39 hits, 29 RBIs and 23 runs. The third-year player played both 1st and 3rd base. Thomason hit over .500 in league games, landing on the CIC 2nd team. The Warrior's center fielder hit .400 with 6-doubles, 12 stolen bases and 32 runs scored. Ring's fielding percentage was well over .900 patrolling right field. She came on strong in the second half of the season, hitting .337 and could drive the ball deep or beat out a bunt from the left side, garnering her the team's Most Improved award. Katie Gibson was another third-year player that saw time

on the mound and fired most of the JV contests.

Joining Boyer for the double play contact was younger sister Ava. The second year led the team in round-trippers hitting the second most program history, sending 14 over the outfield fence. She ended the season with a .485 batting average, 14 extra-base hits, 46 RBIs and a team-best 55 runs scored earning her 1st team All-Conference honors and a spot on the All-State team for the second straight year. Allyson Pettry scored double-digit runs in her second campaign taking home a varsity letter and classmate Emily Veach broke into the starting lineup out of the game earning a letter, but injuries ended her season early.

Kayleigh Bales, Alaina Smith and Bayleigh Taylor highlighted a big freshman group. Taylor rose to the occasion as the Warrior's number two pitcher. The lefty threw over 70 innings, battling her way to a 6-2 record on the year with 6 saves. She was part of a big win over Teutopolis, where she retired the last 8 batters in order to seal the deal on a win. She also threw a complete game in the regional championship giving up just 3 earned runs. Smith grew into first base posting a .976 fielding average after the dust settled. She also came up big at the plate finishing the year with over 30 hits, 2 home runs and a .322 batting average. Bales saw time as a pinch hitter late in the regular season before taking over the DP spot in the final 5 games of the season.

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