



The HCHS Hornets Baseball Team members for 2025 are, kneeling from left: Jacob Shultz, Lane Dixon, Grant Smith, Noah Keown, Carson Clark, Jack Roberts, Landis Pate, Chance Lyday, Dylan Mucker, Nolan Maxwell, Leland Wilson and Tripp Hager.

Standing: head coach Tony Banta, coach Joe Hager, Hayden Cameron, Hunter Greathouse, Hendrix Taylor, Loudon Fluharty, Dec Lewko, Porter Hay, Carter Lyday, Jackson McKinney and coaches Cole Dixon, Steve Lyday and Nathan Maxwell.

Hornets will play under new management in coach Banta

By Steve Wimmer

The HCHS Hornets baseball program is under new leadership with the hiring of new head coach Tony Banta. The new skipper took over after former head coach Brad Keown resigned last year. Banta comes with loads of experience, both as a player and coach. He played four years of college baseball at the University of West Alabama and has coached the game on many levels, including AAU, high school and college. The players know Tony pretty well as he's been an assistant at Hancock County for a couple of years before accepting the head job.

"I'm very excited to be the head coach here. I'm familiar with all the kids and I'm a baseball guy, so when the opportunity came about I was fortunate enough to be hired." Hornet fans will likely see a different style of play than what they're used to seeing under the new coach.

"We're trying to play to our strengths and minimize our weaknesses. We have a lot of team speed and the kids have been working really hard on contact hitting, as opposed to just going up there and swinging for the fences. We'll be a 'small-ball' team. We'll bunt, hit-and-run, advance runners, steal some bases and try to create chaos on the base paths. Coach Banta has a qualified staff that includes long time assistant Steve Lyday, along with some new members. Joe Hager, who played college baseball at the University of the

Cumberlands, Nathan Maxwell, who played college sports and has been involved with youth leagues in Hancock County, Cole Dixon, former Hornet and the all-time stolen base leader at HCHS, and Alex Salazar, who will be the pitching coach.

"Alex is from Japan and he was a highly touted pitcher. He's very knowledgeable in terms of mechanics and arm care. He brings a ton of knowledge and we're really excited to have him," Banta said.

The new coach talked about his players and some expected lineups the fans will see.

Porter Hay is a junior and is the team's top returning pitcher.

"Porter has the potential to be the best pitcher in the district and the region. He's trying to overcome an arm injury right now, which will have a huge impact on our team if he can't throw, but he's been going through rehab and therapy. If we can get him on the mound it makes us an extremely stronger team."

Dec Lewko (senior) is a lefty pitcher and center fielder/first baseman. Loudon Fluharty (senior)

will pitch and play third base, and senior Carson Clark will pitch and play left field. The coach also mentioned others who will see time on the mound, including Noah Keown (junior), Hunter Greathouse (junior), Nolan Maxwell (freshman), Grant Smith (freshman) and possibly others.

Hornet players have had and will have their chances to earn playing time under coach Banta.

"My philosophy is that I give every kid an opportunity to earn a position. I not only look at the skill play, but I look at the intangibles... who's hustling,

who has a good attitude. Those things are really important to me. You can have all the skill in the world, but if you don't have a good attitude and you're not a good teammate, that impacts your baseball team."

Jack Roberts (junior) returns as the Hornets' catcher. He led the team in batting with an average of .310 last year and he hit the team's only home run.

"Jack has gotten a lot stronger. He does have some pop, but he's a good contact hitter. He runs extremely well and it wouldn't be a surprise to see him hitting in the lead-

off position."

Coach Banta also mentioned 8th grader Tripp Hager who he believes will be able to spell Roberts behind the plate on occasion.

"Having a second catcher who can relieve Jack is an asset, plus Jack is a good player anywhere on the field. So, when you move Jack you lose nothing and in some cases you may gain a little bit."

Lewko hit .304 and played center field last year, but Banta has moved the left-hander to first base to start the 2025 season.

"Sometimes boys don't always throw the ball where you want them to

and I needed to put someone at first that I can trust. Dec is a phenomenal center fielder, but we need to be solid in the infield and have a player who's not scared to go get it."

Lewko has moved back to center field for the time being due to injuries.

Second base is being played by sophomore Dylan Mucker.

"I've seen him take some reps and he looks so fluid at second base."

Jacob Shultz (junior) has good hands, a good arm and great footwork at short stop.

"I like to be strong up the middle. I have a good catcher, a good second baseman and short stop."

Fluharty is the likely third baseman. The senior played the third sack well last year, he has a strong arm and he hit the ball hard at times.

"We're looking at Fluharty at third base. Loudon has power but we need to cut down on his strike outs. We have some depth there and Greathouse and Hayden

Cameron have also looked pretty good there for when Fluharty is pitching."

Lane Dixon (sophomore) will be in center field, but recently injured his elbow.

"I've really been impressed with Lane in center field. He can run, and if we can get him to play to

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2025 HORNET BASEBALL		
3/17	Owensboro Knights V	H 5:30
3/18	Madisonville V/JV	A 5:30
3/20	Owensboro V/JV	H 5:30
3/21	McLean County V/JV	A 5:30
3/22	Madisonville JV	A 12:00
	Union Co. JV @ Madisonville	2:00
3/24	Daviess County V/JV	H 5:30
3/25	Grayson County V/JV	A 5:30
3/26	Henderson V	A 6:00
3/27	Whitesville V	H 5:30
3/30	Spencer Co. V	Florida 3:00
3/31	Mason Co. V	Florida 6:00
4/1	Holy Cross V	Florida 9:00
4/3	Hopkinsville V	Florida 9:00
4/3	Woodford V	Florida 12:00
4/7	McLean County V	Trinity
4/8	Trinity V	
4/10	Apollo V/JV	H 5:30
4/11	Collins V	H 6:30
4/12	Collins V	H 11:00
4/14	Muhlenberg County V	A 6:00
4/16	Heritage Hills V	H 6:00
4/17	Meade County V	A 5:30
4/21	Meade County V/JV	H 5:30
4/21	Owensboro Knights V	A 5:30
4/24	Breckinridge County V/JV	H 5:30
4/25	Breckinridge County V/JV	A 5:30
4/28	Apollo V/JV	A 5:30
4/29	Tell City V/JV	H 5:30
5/1	Daviess County V/JV	A 5:30
5/2	Grayson County V/JV	H 5:30
5/3	Ohio County V/JV	A 12:00
5/5	Henderson V/JV	H 5:30
5/9	Webster County V/JV	A 6:00
5/13	Owensboro V/JV	A 5:30
5/15	Owensboro Catholic V/JV	A 5:30
5/16	McLean County V/JV	H 5:30
5/19	District @ Breckinridge County	

**Good Luck
Hancock Hornets**

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Swing for the fences, Hornets!