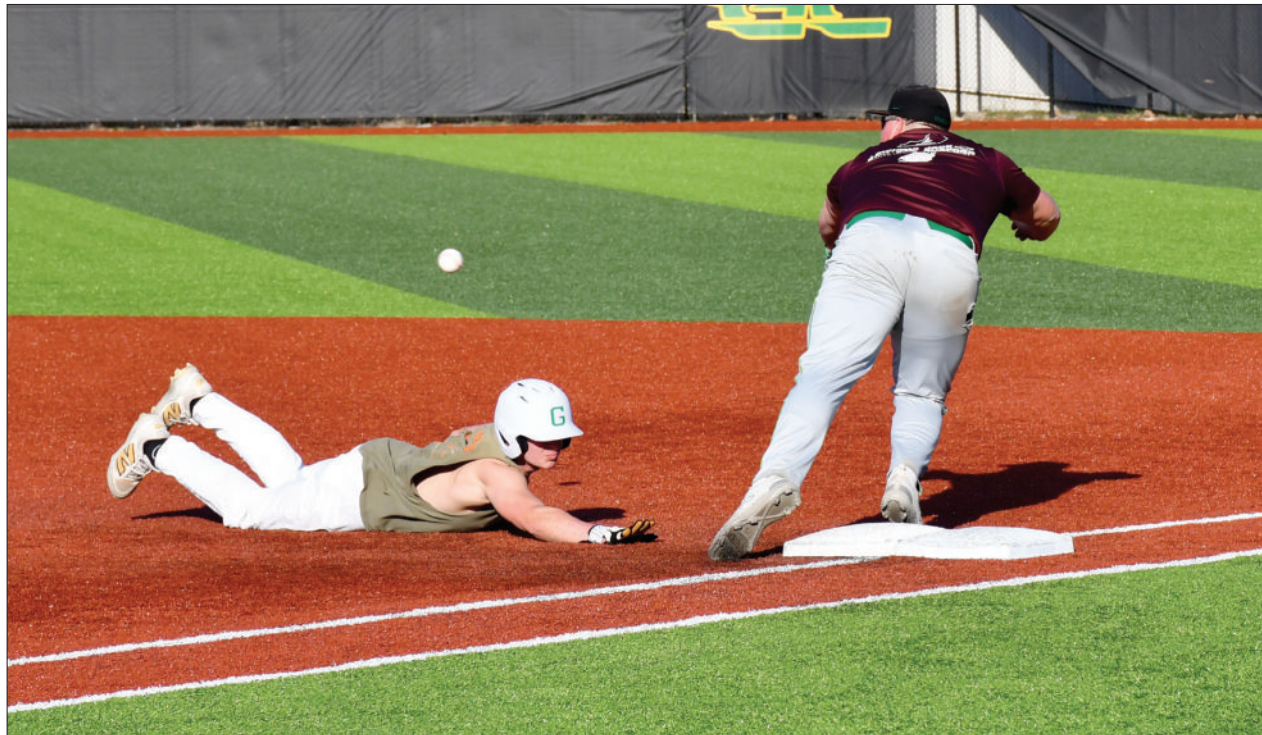


Tatum Durrett, one of the senior pitchers for Green County this year, winds up during a practice session last week.



Larson Matney scampers back to first base while Andrew Houk stretches for the pickoff throw from his first base position.

Baseball Dragons excited about upcoming season

Home scrimmage is Friday

DALE CURRY
STAFF WRITER

Coming off an 18th District Tournament championship and runner-up in the 5th Region Tournament, the Dragons are excited to get started in this year's campaign. Dragon fans get their first look at the team Friday at 6:00 p.m. at American Legion Park during a scrimmage game against Greenwood High School. The Gators finished last year at 28-7 and advanced to the semifinals of the powerful 4th Region Tournament.

Head Baseball Coach Brennen Milby knows that this year's schedule is a difficult one for the Dragons. "There's a stretch where we have four out of five games against teams that have been to the state tournament in the last two years," Milby said.

Practice has been great this year, according to the coach. "The excitement carried over from last year," Milby said. "The kids are really working hard, doing everything they can to be successful. I get a ton of Parent Square messages asking if kids can go down to the park and hit on the weekend or stay late after practice and I can't say no to something like that. They want to do more work than I'm asking them to do. They have a great work ethic."

The team lost four seniors from last year's team that finished 20-12. "We will really miss all four," Milby said. "They all contributed in different ways. Hayden (Blakeman) is super talented and just a great athlete. Houston (Hodges) set the tone for everyone, making sure things are done the right way. Riley (Sluder) almost became another coach on the field. A lot of times he would remind me to shift the defense or do things I mean to do but forgot. Austin (Squires) brought a ton of energy, kept everyone upbeat and positive."

In spite of losing those seniors, Milby knows he has a good nucleus for this year's team that comes with lots of experience. In addition to having four seniors on this year's squad, he also has six juniors on the team. "That experience is something we will lean on," Milby said. "Not often does a smaller

school like Green County have an older team. We are usually a team that is capable of making some noise in the region but because we are usually made up of three seniors, three juniors, a couple of sophomores and freshman, you can't always trust them in tough situations. But this year we are lucky enough to have several guys with multiple years of varsity experience. We are excited for that."

In addition to the eagerness of having several returning players, four of the top five hitters from last year are back again this year.

"I think that gives the team confidence," Milby said. "We know that if we just keep doing things the way we've been doing them in preseason work and last year, it will put a lot of pressure on the other teams. When we go into a game confidently, they have to find a way to get us out. We don't have to find a way to get a hit."

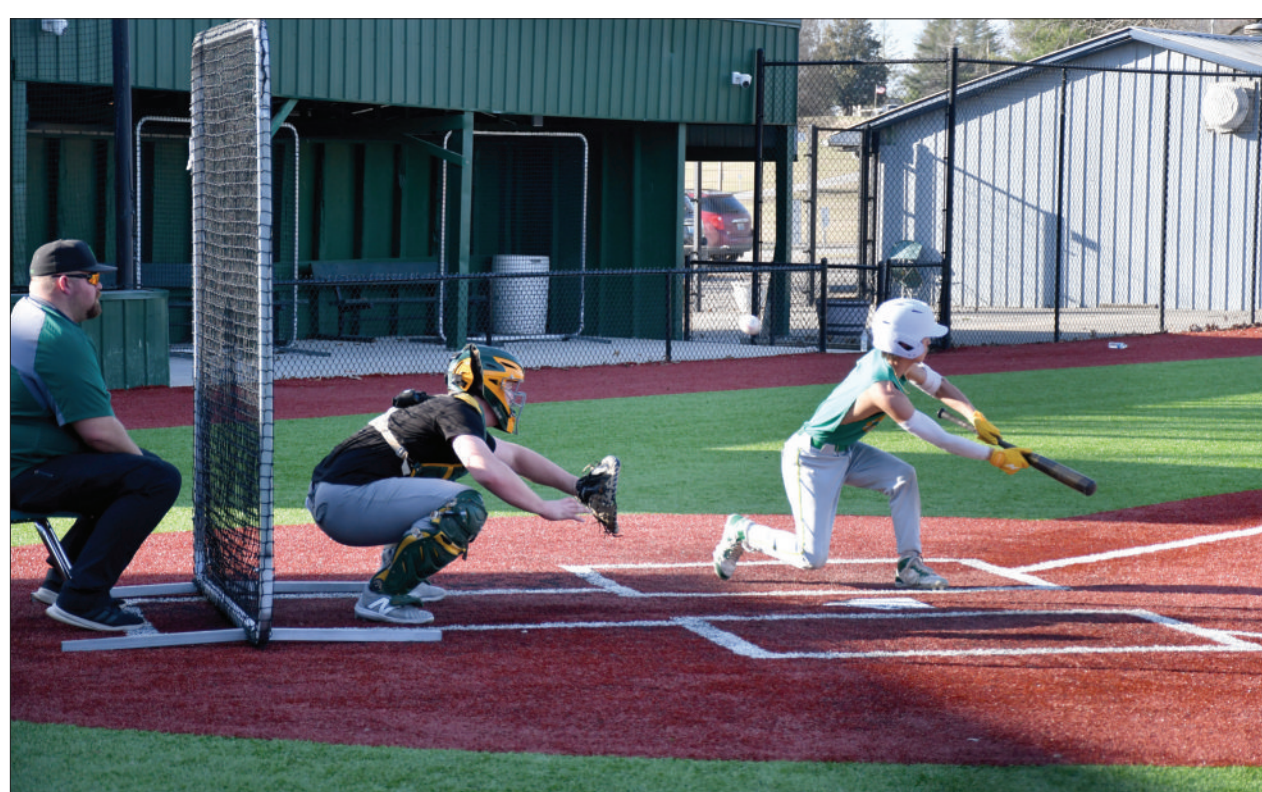
This year's schedule is also home-friendly. The Dragons have 16 home games in addition to the games in the Wooden Bat Tournament.

"We are excited about the home schedule," Milby said. "Usually a schedule is 50-50 or maybe not quite that good, but this year we have several home games, and those games are spread out through the year. Hopefully some of them are on warm nights. We do have a long home stretch of home games just before the Wooden Bat Tournament during Spring Break in April."

The three-day Wooden Bat Tournament begins Tuesday, April 7 with Green County taking on Allen County-Scottsville in a 5:00 p.m. game. That game is the fourth game of the day. Other teams in the tournament include Bowling Green, Walton Verona, Logan County, and Garrard County.

Another team, CEC, can't be part of the whole tournament but will play a double header that first day with the other six teams continuing in the tournament.

Some years, the Wooden Bat Tournament just gives teams the opportunity to play various teams but this year, the format is the same as last year, with winners advancing to play winners and losing teams taking on other losing teams. The championship game will be played during the day



Carter Allen squares to bunt while Ty Bonta anticipates the play from his catching position. Assistant Coach Seth Jones keeps an eye on the play from behind home plate.

Photos by Dale Curry

on Thursday, April 9. The All A Tournament is another big opportunity for the Dragons. They play Washington County on March 23 with the winner advancing to the semifinals to take on either Fort Knox or Caverna. The semifinals and finals are at Bethlehem. "We feel good about that tournament," Milby said. "The last few years we haven't played our best in the tournament for some reason. That's something that's on our minds a lot. We're already talking about making a statement in that tournament."

Campbellsville and Bethlehem are in the other bracket of the All A Region Tournament and Milby knows that both teams are expected to be good with Campbellsville being one of the top teams in the region, but he feels as if the Dragons have something to prove.

The Dragons, this year, have 18 players on the roster but according to Milby, it is technically 17 players since Elijah Bishop is hurt.

"Out of those 17 players," Milby said, "I think 14 of them will pitch at some point. A lot of the guys have been on the mound before and they got some good experience. We have a good mix of young guys, with seven freshmen and they all pitch as well."

Milby believes that the region winner this year will come from central Kentucky, the Taylor, Green, LaRue county area.

"The Hardin County district will be solid but they may not be at the top of the region," Milby said.

In addition to the normal games versus

region opponents, Milby explained that some of the other teams on the Dragons' schedule may be included in the top 25 teams in the state.

"Bowling Green should be a really good team," Milby said. "I expect Russell County to be around the top 25 and Boyle County as well in the top 25."

Milby will be joined on the coaching staff this year by Seth Jones, Nick Przybylek

and Matt Squires. Jones and Przybylek were part of the staff last year and Squires returns after a year away from the team.

"We like what we have as far as players," Milby said. "We are looking to challenge them so that they are ready when the post-season gets here. We like our group and are confident in the players that we return. We have good hitters

and some guys that threw important innings for us. We have high expectations by the coaches and players, and we hope that the community will match us in those high expectations."

After the scrimmage on Friday, the Dragons open with a doubleheader at Caverna on Monday, followed by the home opener against Glasgow on Thursday, March 19.

SUDOKU

					3		5	
3							6	
			1	6	2	4		
			2		1		8	
		7						
	1		8	9				
6	9				2	7		8
2							5	3
				4				

Level: Intermediate

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

6	2	9	8	4	7	1	3	5
3	5	3	1	9	4	6	1	2
8	9	4	3	5	2	7	1	8
4	1	2	8	9	5	6	3	7
8	5	7	4	6	3	1	9	2
9	6	3	2	7	1	5	8	4
7	8	5	1	3	6	2	4	9
3	4	9	5	2	7	8	6	1
1	2	6	9	8	4	3	7	5

ANSWER: