

Softball team gears up for Thursday opener

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt



Returning letterwinners on the 2010 HHS girls' softball team are pictured, from left, front row, Chandler Gerk, Jordan Zeiler, Karci Lockwood and Makenzie Ault; and back row, Marci Vasa, Laura Gerk, Macey Pierce and Ashley Campbell. —Enterprise photo

HHS softball action takes to the field Thursday, Sept. 2 for the season opener at Imperial, Neb. starting at 4 p.m. with a varsity doubleheader.

Kicking off the home field competition Saturday, Sept. 4 will be a varsity doubleheader with Yuma in Holyoke at 10 a.m.

Nineteen girls make up this year's HHS team, led by eight returning letterwinners.

Three exchange students, three Haxtun girls and three from Sedgwick County join Holyoke players to form the Dragon team.

Returning with letters this season are seniors Marci Vasa from Holyoke, Makenzie Ault from Revere and Macey Pierce from Haxtun; juniors Laura Gerk and Jordan Zeiler from Holyoke, Ashley Campbell from Revere and Karci Lockwood from Haxtun; and sophomore Chandler Gerk from Holyoke.

Upperclassmen dominate the Dragon roster, with eight seniors, seven juniors, two sophomores and two freshmen.

Coach Ashley Clayton, starting her second year as head mentor for the Lady Dragons, is excited about the season.

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She noted the girls have high expectations and are finally realizing they're capable of competing.

"It's exciting to feed off what happened last year at districts," said coach Clayton. The girls beat Yuma who had previously defeated them handily in regular-season play. "We played strong, consistent ball, turned a few double plays and had a home run," said Clayton of the district ball game last year.

"The girls are realizing they're right there and have what it takes to go to the next level," added Clayton.

Both Holyoke and Sedgwick County had successful 2009-10 girls' basketball seasons, and that helped, noted the coach. The girls from the two schools competed against each other in basketball, but quickly set that aside to work together in the softball arena.

Citing the first two weeks of practice, coach Clayton said the girls hustled and worked hard. She feels good about the change in the competitive atmosphere among the team and praised senior leadership for driving that.

Lower Platte Activities Association teams competing in 3A softball include Akron, Holyoke, Wray and Yuma. These four will be joined by Union Pacific teams Burlington and Limon to form District 4 for post-season competition.

Steven Ortner serves as assistant softball coach, and Ron Lock and Mike Meusborn are volunteers. Junior Amy Krogmeier serves as team manager.

This Saturday's doubleheader with Yuma is one of only two home games slated for the Lady Dragons this season. Holyoke will host Wray Saturday, Sept. 25 in the other home field doubleheader.

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HHS will compete at a Burlington tournament, as well as other contests at Akron, Wray, Limon and Burlington.