

**PINIAT, SETTE, KASKIW NAMED RAIDER CAPTAINS**

# Raider Softballers Could Be Big Contenders This Year

By FRED LECOMTE  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Fielding eight returning veteran players, it's no surprise that the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School softball team could be contenders for Union County and sectional honors. Finishing with a 16-10 record last year, these veterans bring with them fine pitching, defensive maturity and plenty of clout throughout their lineup.

The Raiders will showcase senior Tri-Captain hurler Elaine Piniat who showed discipline, consistency and outstanding control last year. Piniat compiled a 12-8 record with a 1.04 ERA and sat down 122 batters.

"I'm very confident with her. I used to call her pitches but we have (Lauren) Mains who now does the calling and it's been working out great," said Raider Head Coach Kelly Covert. "I don't worry at all when she's on the mound. She knows what she wants, she knows what she's doing and loves the sport."

Up and coming pitchers who may see innings include sophomore Brianne Mahoney, sophomore Stephanie Goines and sophomore Nicole Colinari.

"They have club experience, they have field and hitting experience and are in our future plans when Piniat leaves us at the end of the season,"

said Covert.

Junior catcher Mains provided plenty of fireworks with a .368 BA, including 20 runs and 21 RBI last year, and is the spark plug on the team.

"If you don't have a good catcher, there goes your game. The confidence that I have in her is amazing," said Covert. "Very few balls get by her. She plays the game and gets the job done. She leads the team and does it the way she plays the game and has a good time doing it," said Covert.

After graduating Taylor Cianciotta, the Raiders need to find a solid second baseman.

"Right now, we're planning on sophomore Nicole Colinari who played third base last year. She has great speed, mobility and the ability to play several positions," said Covert. "Goines also can play third may see some time at second along with senior Tara Scibek, junior Ashley Jacobi and junior Jessica Khan."

Senior Tri-Captain Melissa Sette, who was nothing short of sensational last year, returns to play shortstop. She provides an excellent glove and excellent speed and is a very consistent hitter who compiled a .318 BA, including five homeruns, five triples and 30 runs scored last year.

"When she leaves we're definitely going to feel it so we are going to watch

her play. She's a coach's dream, constantly softball driven and there is 110 percent all of the time," said Covert.

Junior Jillian Lusk who comes up with key hits in critical situations returns to shore up first base.

"Her confidence has risen tremendously. When she's in there, you see it and I'm excited about that," said Covert. "In our four scrimmages, she connected at the plate and you like to see that."

Senior Tri-Captain speedster Kelli Kaskiw controls centerfield and will keep the team focused and upbeat at all times.

"She's fast and there are no worries that she's going to get there," said Covert.

Veteran senior Lauren Benevento will patrol right field.

"We got the backups and the arms to go to with it. Sophomore Melanie Davis, junior Abigail Jenkins junior Hailey Mroczek and sophomore Difani Courtney will serve as backups," said Covert.

Junior Allie Brown who has speed and a strong throwing arm is expected to see time in left and right field.

"We have 16 players on the roster who have speed, good hitting mechanics and we can mix it up. We're not too overconfident but we're excited," concluded Covert.



MORE OF THE SAME...The Lady Blue Devil defensive and offensive forces promise to create huge clouds of dust this season. Without a returning pitcher, the question is, how will this squad respond.

**FIETKIEWICZ, FLANNERY, OLSEN NAMED CAPTAINS**

# Blue Devil Softballers to Use A Combination of Pitchers

By FRED LECOMTE  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Pitching success and a solid offensive punch led last year's Westfield High School softball team to a 16-10 record. Without a returning experienced starting pitcher, however, the Blue Devils need to fill the void by using a combination of pitchers.

The Blue Devils graduated two fine players in pitcher Lauren Gelmetti who compiled a 12-10 record and second baseman Katie Smith who provided hitting stability with a .373 BA.

"They certainly set a high standard, we will miss them; however, we have plenty of talent to jump right into their shoes because of the fine example they have set," said Blue Devil Head Coach Tara Pignoli.

Last year, the Blue Devils were eliminated in the quarterfinals in the Union County Tournament then sent packing by Hunterdon Central in the state sectional semifinals.

"High expectations were set coming off a sectional title the previous year. It was a lot for them to live up to and we struggled a little with the pressure," explained Pignoli.

New faces providing a bright outlook on the mound will include senior Sam Mooney, junior Lindsay Brown and a couple of strong freshmen.

"It's early to say that I have a number-one pitcher and that may be something that could happen all season. Brown had an impressive outing but

they're all still fighting it out at this point," said Pignoli.

The Blue Devils expect to have a strong infield. Senior Jillian Olsen will take charge behind the plate and, after batting .358 last year, could be a terror with the metal stick.

"She will play a big roll with a couple of new infielders joining the team along with a pitcher without varsity experience," said Pignoli. "She'll have to take charge in terms of calling pitches but also in stabilizing and communicating with the infield. She has a great spirit, a really positive attitude and leadership abilities."

Junior Jenny LaSpata, solid at first base, finished with a .954 fielding average last year.

"She developed and did an excellent job. She has shown more aggressiveness and confidence and we hope to get her bat into the lineup as well," said Pignoli.

Senior Tri-Captain Kristina Fietkiewicz, very strong at shortstop, brings lots of pop with the bat. She batted .333 (BA) and powered four homers with 21 RBI.

"She's a fantastic softball player. She has every part of the game finely tuned. She's an excellent leader and I expect her to continue to inspire and deliver as she has in past years," said Pignoli.

Sophomore Erin Scialabba may have earned the third base position.

"She's solid in the field, has a very

strong arm and has shown promise at the plate," said Pignoli.

The new face at second base may be freshman Kim Townsend.

"She comes in with tremendous composure, has wonderful skills and has looked real smooth out there," said Pignoli.

Returning as one of the steady centerfielders in the conference is senior Tri-Captain Mary Kate (MK) Flannery who finished with 23 putouts. The speedster had a .463 BA, including 10 stolen bases and 24 runs scored.

"A capable and exceptional player. She's a student of the game and passionate about it. She plays hard and well and has been an institution in centerfield for Westfield," said Pignoli. "She's the anchor of our defense and will be crucial to our offensive success as well."

Flannery will be joined by senior outfielders Jess Moskowitz and Jen Urciuoli. Additionally, the Devils will field junior Ashley Dunnan and sophomore Alex Pecora who will seek primary roles.

"The strength for this team is that they are so different from any team that we've had in the past," said Pignoli. "There is a wide mix of experience and that's going to force them to find their own chemistry and define who they really are. I see that as a huge advantage and it's going to be what they make of it."



SHOOTING FOR COUNTY AND SECTIONAL HONORS...Leading a strong contingent of Raider softballers, pictured, left to right, are: senior Tri-Captains Kelli Kaskiw, Elaine Piniat and Melissa Sette.

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