

Cougar Nine Looking to Learn from Last Year

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

tunate enough to have several who are good catchers. We are hoping between our pitching and catching, we will be able to keep us in all the ball games," Coach McCaffery said.

Several veterans return to occupy the infield positions, which includes Connolly (first), junior Tyler Szczech (shortstop) and junior Mike Meola (third).

"We had a bunch of kids who were on that team that played in the county final and the state final. We are hoping that type of experience they can carry over to this year. Pat Connolly has two years, Tyler Szczech had a good year last year and Mike Meola, as well. Here at Cranford, we want everybody to contribute. We want them to know that they have value, that everybody has a role here. That's the way we've always done it and that's the way we will continue to do," Coach McCaffery expressed.

Senior Sean Petrucci and sophomore Jake DeClerico will play second. Also in the mix are sophomore Jack Jarrosz (shortstop) and junior Chris Guiditta (third).

"We want them to really stress making routine plays consistently, give them three outs in an inning and just making sure that we play fundamen-

tally sound baseball. Focus on knowing where the ball goes when the ball is hit to you and in the infield knowing what to do. And give each team that we are playing only 21 outs per game," Coach McCaffery added.

Junior Jamie Shriner, known as an offensive threat in his third year varsity, will occupy right field.

"Jimmy is a three-sport athlete, really a good kid, a hard-working kid and we are hoping he will continue to have success on the baseball field. He's a gamer," Coach McCaffery commented.

In centerfield would be junior Deandre Fieldhouse and sophomore Mike Murphy. Senior John Markese and sophomores Connor Katz (also third base) and Joe Meola are expected to patrol leftfield.

The turf field has its advantages, especially early in the season, but are there any disadvantages?

"I know we are able to practice when there's snow on other fields, so I would take the situation where we play on a field where we have to adjust only one time. I know where there are other teams that are struggling to get outside. We are fortunate to get this field. It was a community effort that a lot of people worked

together to make this field a possibility. We are very appreciative of it and we are very happy. We will adjust to any field we have to play on when the time presents itself," Coach McCaffery said.

The Cougars will not be shy offensively.

"We are hoping that everybody has productive at-bats and are good in situational hitting. We want to make sure that we put the ball in play and we are always putting pressure on the opponent," Coach McCaffery commented.

Speaking of pressure, "We are going to be aggressive. You don't score from first base. You have to be active. We have some kids who can run. To be a good baserunner, you don't have to be fast. You have good instincts. You have to be able to read," Coach McCaffery pointed out.

The Cougars will plunge right into the rivalry thing with a road trip to Scotch Plains-Fanwood on Saturday, March 31, at 4 p.m. for the season opener then they will host Westfield on Thursday, April 5, at 4 p.m.

"This year's team so far has been working hard and we are trying to get ready for our first game this season with Scotch Plains on March 31," Coach McCaffery said.



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times

MOVING OVER TO SHORTSTOP...Raider senior Sam Schetelich, center, who played second base last year will shift to play shortstop this season (May 2017 files against New Providence).

WILKINSON NO. 1 ACE ON MOUND, SPEED ON BASES Baseball Raiders to Face Huge Challenges Right off the 'Bat'

By DAVID B. CORBIN
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

"Be Prepared" has been a Boys Scout motto and this year's Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School baseball team must take heed with a schedule that begins with face-to-face showdowns against three of the toughest rivals in the state. Poor weather has not helped but the Raiders must be prepared to open their season at home this Saturday, March 31, at 1 p.m. against the Cranford Cougars, who won the North Jersey, Section 2, Group 3 title last year and the Group 3 semifinal before losing an eight-inning thriller to No. 2 Allentown in the Group 3 Championship game.

But that is not all! Next the Raiders travel to Westfield on Tuesday, April 3, to battle with the Blue Devils, who won the Union County Tournament (UCT) last year. Then on Thursday, April 5, at 4 p.m. the Raiders will host the Governor Livingston Highlanders, last year's Central Jersey, Group 2 Champions.

Last year the Raiders advanced to the UCT semifinals and the North Jersey, Section 2, Group 4 quarterfinals and finished with a 17-10 record. The Raiders recorded some key victories, such as a 9-3 win over Westfield, a 3-2 win over Watchung Hills and a 6-0 win over Hunterdon Central but did experience a pair of heartbreaking, 3-2, setbacks to the Cranford Cougars, the second one being in the UCT semis.

This year's Raiders will have some tough shoes to fill with the graduation of a host of seniors, including standout shortstop Peter Warren, standout catcher Peter Yarem, speedster Jake Canavan and ace pitcher Timmy Geissel.

"Replacing Peter Yarem and Peter Warren will be no small task. Behind the plate junior Michael Dieu [who saw some time last year] and freshman Matt Syvertsen are giving each other some great competition. At shortstop, senior Sam Schetelich and junior Jonathan Ramos are compet-

ing," Raider Head Coach Joe Higgins said.

Last year, Schetelich was pretty much a regular in the starting lineup and went 13-for-51 for a .255 batting average (BA), had four doubles and both team's home runs, while adding 12 RBI and 10 runs scored. Ramos saw limited time and finished with a .333 BA with nine hits, seven runs scored and four RBI. Dieu had a .273 BA. Also in the mix for catcher is junior Eric Refinski.

"Ramos is just returning from an injury. Each of them is looking good at short, and whoever does not play short will compete with juniors Josh Canavan [who also plays outfield] and Tyler Stines at third. Most of these guys are interchangeable to a degree and could compete with sophomore Dean Kirian at second base," Coach Higgins explained.

Returning starter junior Patrick Downey will occupy an outfield position. Last year Downey went 16-for-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16



David B. Corbin for The Westfield Leader and The Times

KEEPING THE RUNNER HONEST...Cougar first baseman Pat Connolly keeps a Millburn Miller base runner honest during a scrimmage game at Memorial Field in Cranford last week.

Prominent Properties

Sotheby's INTERNATIONAL REALTY

Marketing New Jersey Real Estate at the Highest LevelSM

Connect with Us!



928 Columbus Avenue, Westfield \$600,000
This charming 3 bedroom Dutch Colonial has many notable upgrades. Featuring a spacious living room with functioning wood burning fireplace, formal dining room, a kitchen that includes custom butcher block counters and stainless steel appliances, custom french doors leading to the private backyard patio. Close to Manor Park Pool and centrally located between Garwood and Westfield Train Stations.



33 Merker Drive, Edison \$429,000
Nestled in the desired Heights section of Edison lies a bright and spacious 4 bedroom home with hardwood floors flowing throughout, featuring 2 and a half bathrooms, large family room & eat in kitchen. The sizeable backyard is perfect for entertaining guests all summer long.



227 Kings Court, Mountainside Boro \$848,000
Sunlit and spacious Colonial with lovely first floor master suite and three second floor bedrooms with en-suite baths. Well laid-out first floor: the generous Living Room with fireplace opens to the family room with a wall of windows. There are three second floor bedroom suites, all with full baths and walk-in closets. Adding to your living space is a finished basement with rec, exercise & game rooms and much more!



834 Johnston Drive, Watchung \$2,200,000
This architectural masterpiece offers sweeping views of the NYC skyline. Within, a new State of The Art Kitchen appliances design complements an open floor plan creates a resort style ambiance, sustained by endless washes of natural sunlight and old world craftsmanship. There are too many amenities to list. Endless possibilities for entertaining. Nearby shopping, golf, and gourmet dining. Minutes to NYC.



366 New Dover Road, Colonia \$659,000
Beautiful timeless details the interior is composed of a quiet elegance mingled with gracious indulgences. Newer hardwood floors lay a foundation highlighted by classic molding, handsome window arrangement and period details such as Dutch and "peek-a-boo" doors. The generous master suite boasts a dressing area with three closets and a full bath. There are three additional bedrooms with en-suite baths, all on the second floor and too many features to list.



640 Fairfield Ave, Kenilworth \$312,000
This cozy, nicely landscaped and well maintained Cape Cod home is a perfect condo alternative. With updated electric, gas furnace, hot water heater, vinyl siding and windows the over-sized lot is on a dead-end street close to local schools, shopping, dining and major highways. Large deck, double size blacktop driveway and shed included.

200 North Avenue East | Westfield, New Jersey 07090 | Office 908.654.6666 | prominentproperties.com

Regional Offices Serving Northern and Central New Jersey

Living in New Jersey is a Genius DecisionTM Genius Decision

Each office is independently owned and operated

