

Caldwell, Swenson to lead young Wildcat baseball team



Shortstop Nate Swenson is one of two seniors on this season's Louisburg baseball team as the Wildcats said goodbye to seven starters off of last year's team. Louisburg opens its season Thursday with a doubleheader in Paola.

It is never easy when a team loses seven starters and two of its top pitchers from a season ago, but that is the challenge the Louisburg baseball team will face in 2018.

The Wildcats lost three all-Frontier League players to graduation in leadoff hitter Korbin Hankinson, along with pitchers Grant Harding and Dalton Stone, who is currently pitching for Ottawa University.

Still, the cupboard is not bare.

Louisburg will return a pair of senior starters in first baseman Garrett Caldwell and shortstop Nate Swenson to help guide what is young group of Wildcats this season after finishing last year with a 7-14 record.

"Practices have been going well and we are ready to get the season going," Louisburg coach Joel McGhee said. "Everyone has put in a lot of work over the past few weeks and we are looking forward to getting into competition."

Caldwell is the team's top returning offensive player as he

earned second team all-Frontier League honors last season at the utility spot. He led the Wildcats with a .396 batting average to go along with two home runs, three doubles, a triple and 14 RBIs.

Swenson also figures to be a fixture in the Louisburg lineup after driving in 12 runs and recording five doubles last year.

Those two Wildcats aren't the only ones with varsity experience as sophomore Madden Rutherford (third base) and junior Beckett Rasmussen (catcher) all started several games last season, but each hit over .300 in limited action.

"We are looking for these guys to be significant contributors this season," McGhee said of his four returners. "Garrett had a great year and we are hoping that this season brings similar success to what he saw at the plate last season.

"Swenson started every game at shortstop and threw quality innings in relief last season. He will see time at shortstop again this season and will be a key contributor in the starting rotation. Rasmussen caught several games last season and brings a lot of versatility to the team, both at the plate and in the field. Rutherford contributed significantly as part of the starting rotation and at third base, and we are looking for him to do that again this year."



Senior Garrett Caldwell led the Wildcat offense last season with a .396 batting average and a pair of home runs.

Louisburg will have a lot of flexibility when it comes to the field as some positions go three-deep on the depth chart.

Caldwell, junior Noah Larson and sophomore Garrett Harding could all see time at first base, while junior Chase Norton, Rasmussen and Harding could all see time behind the plate at catcher.

Swenson will be a fixture at shortstop, while Rasmussen, Michael Rogers, Gabe Rader and Cole Williams could all see time at second base. Rutherford, Caldwell and Andrew Krause will all play third base.

In the outfield, junior Jakob Krause will man center, while junior Logan McClellan, sophomore Andrew Krause, Rasmussen and

Rader will all see time in corner spots.

“Our lineup will be fairly flexible this season,” McGhee said. “Depending upon who is pitching or who has the hot bat, the lineup could vary significantly. We have options and have several versatile players, which allows us to be more fluid than we have been in the past few seasons.”

On the mound, Swenson and Rutherford are the team’s two returning pitchers from a season ago, but the Wildcats will look to several others to help bolster their staff. Larson, Jakob Krause and McClellan all figure to throw several innings.

“Aside from Swenson and Rutherford our pitching staff has yet to get experience at the varsity level,” McGhee said. “We have several that we know will bring quality pitching performances this season. Noah, Jakob and Logan have all contributed with quality outings the past two seasons at the junior varsity level. We are looking forward to what these three will contribute this season, knowing they have progressed in their pitching abilities over the past seasons. Each has seen success that we are looking to bring to the varsity level.”

Louisburg was scheduled to open its season with a doubleheader at home Thursday against Paola, but the games have been moved to Paola due to wet field conditions. First pitch is still set for 4:30 p.m.