

Hawks have keys for success

Written by Don Taylor
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The Prairie baseball program will continue to grow in 2013.

Gone from its successful 2012 team are three-year starters in second baseman Brayton Carlson, who hit .355 with five home runs and 39 RBIs; Jason Velvick, who sported a team-leading .439 average; Bryce Alberts, who led the pitching staff with 10 starts and 55 innings pitched; and Dillon Pond, a gritty catcher who gave them 16 RBIs.

Despite the significant losses, the Hawks return as much to their lineup as any team in the Metro.

Prairie returns nine lettermen. The leading returning player is Brennan Hammer, who hit .348 while going 7-1 on the mound in a season in which he was hampered by injury.

"Brennan is a returning all-stater who has a consistent and deadly bat with a strong presence on the mound," said Prairie Coach Matt Thede.

The Hawks also boast the "Tyler Triangle." Shortstop Ty Mouglin (.349), first baseman Tyler Votroubek (.429) and third baseman Tyler Butz (.331) will provide much of the firepower for the offense and cause many potential baserunners to disappear on their way to first base on groundball outs.

Also returning are outfielders Mitch Adams, Caleb Davison and Trey Beckman, as well as utility player Mitch Peters and pitcher Spencer Dean. Blake Stallman, under the radar due to injury last season, will also return to supply some power to an already solid lineup.

The Hawks will have a formidable lineup.

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“We have a huge returning senior class,” said Thede. “Our lineup will be filled mostly with seniors and we will go as they go. Our chemistry is and will be fantastic.”

The pitching staff will be led by Hammer. Others making up an experienced mound corps include Adams (3-6), Beckman (2-0), Dean (2-2) and Davison (1-1).

The expectation is that Votroubek and Stallman should provide support and Ben Milks could break into the rotation.

It appears that Dillon Kuchemann will be the man behind the plate in “command of the pitchers,” as it was expressed by Thede. Backing up behind the plate, as he did last season, will be Butz if needed.

“If we can throw strikes we will have a pretty good team,” said Thede. “If not we’ll be pretty average.”

Thede’s Prairie Hawks may not boast the power arms that Linn-Mar may have this summer, but they will have solid pitching and no one will have a more veteran lineup.

Serious offense and experienced quality defense should help make the Prairie pitching staff more than challenging all season. This could be a state contender.