

Softball team prepares for battle at Alumni Field

By Anna Post
EDITOR

Every new season brings change. A new lineup, new talent and new camaraderie. This season, however, brings new opportunities.

On May 14, the girls softball team will take on Lakeview High School at University of Michigan's Alumni Field.

Lakeview arranged the event and immediately thought of playing their rivals North.

"We have always had a friendly rivalry, and a lot of girls on both teams know each other, so it works out pretty well," captain Liz Grumeretz said.

The transition to playing on the esteemed field will be an easy for the team since the dimensions of North's field are similar to that of U of M's.

Even though the team is playing in front of a larger crowd than it is used to, but assistant coach Bob Zaranek believes this event will be something the players remember.

"It's a good opportunity for the girls be able to play at a bigger venue," Zaranek said. "A lot of them plan to go off and play in college, so it's a good opportunity for them to see the facilities and see something that is really well done because they put a lot of money in that program."

With 10 returning varsity players and new additions to the team, captain Sarah Cherry is excited to see what her experienced team brings to the table.

"I'm very confident that we will win," Cherry said. "Our team is the best it's been in the time I've been here at North."

We have a solid lineup where everyone can hit, which makes for a strong team."

For freshman Evelyn Zacharias, being able to play at the varsity level and participate in this event is something to look forward to.

"I am very fortunate to be able to be apart of this team," Zacharias said. "Being a freshman is a little nerve racking, but it's also very exciting. We get to play at this amazing stadium. It's a once in a lifetime opportunity."

For the seniors, this game is bittersweet. The game against Lakeview will be the most anticipated of the season, but some seniors will not attend since prom is the same evening. The coaches emphasize that it is the player's decision to attend prom or the game, and that their presence isn't mandatory.

Grumeretz won't be attending the game and is disappointed that she won't be able to play with her teammates.

"It really sucks that I, along with some other seniors, aren't able to participate in this game because it is a really cool opportunity," Grumeretz said. "I hope everyone who is there really cherishes it and takes a step back to really take in that they are playing on Alumni Field."

In preparation for the game against Lakeview, players have been focusing on improving their skills. The girls also hope to build upon their weaknesses so they play with more confidence.

Whether competing in weekend tournaments against University-Liggett School or training during their off-days, each practice is meant to help them perfect their skills and rise to a higher caliber of play.

Head coach Ron Smith believes that with preparation, his group will be ready when it comes to game day.

The biggest challenge for us is probably just playing the confidence level we should be playing at," Smith said. "We keep working hard everyday and working in the areas that we think aren't quite our strong spots yet. But, it will come."

As team captains, Grumeretz and Cherry try to lead by example. Whenever the team has a poor morale or an error is made, the captains pick the team up and teach their teammates that one error doesn't define the outcome of a game.

Although the team lost to Lakeview at a recent Liggett tournament, the game was close. To succeed on the field, mastering the fundamentals is important, and working on improving positive attitudes and confidence is crucial to the team's success.

"I think our team will perform pretty well for this game," Grumeretz said. "We played them this past weekend in a tourney and definitely came out strong and should've come away with the victory. Overall, it was a good fight, and I think we will execute and finish the game this time around."

Cherry hopes that by the middle of the season, all of the team's hard work will pay off.

"Each game makes us stronger as a team, because we learn to pick each other up and learn from our mistakes," Cherry said. "By the time the U of M game comes, we should be at the peak of our season regarding talent, attitude and knowledge of the game."

Contributing: Trevor Mieczkowski



LAUREN SEXTON



TREVOR MIECZKOWSKI

FAR RIGHT: Freshman Evelyn Zacharias catch a ball and running experience and opportunity to be playing on the field," Zacharias said.

LEFT: Freshmen Evelyn Zacharias, Kayla Kettler, senior Vickie Blaine, and sophomores Becca Alway and Rachel Malinowski up at the mound. Although Alway is proud of the way the team has played, she also said it has room to improve. "I think we did really well," Alway said. "I mean we didn't hit as well as we wanted to, but our defense was pretty solid. We got a couple of runs (on) errors but we always end up working well together and I think everyone is pretty strong on our team."

Student athletes take on role as managers



ABOVE: Junior Max Murray dribbling a soccer ball at girls soccer practice.

TREVOR MIECZKOWSKI

By Ritika Sanikkommu & Trevor Mieczkowski
EDITR-AT-LARGE & ASSISTANT EDITOR

When senior Tommy Essak is not playing on the boys varsity soccer team in the fall, he is assisting the girls in the spring. Essak and junior Max Murray began their positions as student team managers this year.

Essak was recruited by his soccer coaches, Eric Vanston and Olivia Stander. Since the beginning of the season, he has attended every practice and game.

"Max and I had really high soccer IQs," Essak said. "We understood the game really well, and we got really really close with the coach. So when the girls season rolled around, they asked us if we'd like to help out and be managers."

Student managers generally assist the coach. They are at every practice and every game, depending on what they seek to gain from their experience. Coaches approach students to see if they would like to aid them and the team.

Managers may have different rationales for their involvement in a sport. It could be that they didn't make the cut and still want to practice with the team, or perhaps they simply enjoy the technicalities of a sport. Coaches enlist the help of those students.

Senior Jenna VanMarter was previously a runner on the girls cross country team, but because of tendinitis, she decided to take the position as team manager so she could continue her involvement with the team. VanMarter's job description consists of recording each runner's times at meets and maintaining the team's organization.

Managers' responsibilities vary depending on the team they are assisting. Essak and Murray work together to alleviate potential burdens for coach Olivia Stander.

"They kind of just tag-team their responsibilities," Stander said. "There is always one of them at practice, which is a huge help because we have like 15 different soccer balls and all these different nets and the pennies, so they make Eric and I's job a lot easier."

Although there aren't any specific requirements to become a student team manager, athletic director Brian Shelton establishes that an overzealous attitude is not necessary to carry out their duties.

"I make sure that they're not just somebody that's just going to do everything for the team because the players don't want to. They're there to assist," Shelton said. "They mostly assist the coach. What we don't want them doing is helping the star player do everything. They're not in the NBA-type of thing, but in the case of helping out the coach, it really does help them out."

Although a devotion to the sport is not required, Essak's love for soccer was what drew him to the position.

"It's a soccer program, and you have the same coaches coaching the boys team as well, and even though it's different people, the atmosphere is really similar, and it's a lot of fun to be around," Essak said. "I really, really enjoy it."

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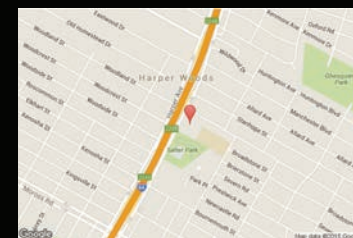
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