

Outlaws return core of players to diamond

By Rongi Yost
Correspondent

The Outlaws are hard at work preparing for the season ahead. Sisters graduated several seniors, but will return a core of players who have played together since little league.

Connor Lake is the lone senior who returns to the varsity squad. He saw minimal time on varsity last year. Lake will play at first base for the Outlaws, and will also see some time on the mound.

“Connor has real power at the bat,” said Coach Steve Hodges. “He showed signs last year of being a potential power hitter, but I haven’t seen him hit yet this season due to basketball just coming to a close.”

Two juniors return for another year, including Alec Gannon and Ryan Funk.

Gannon, an all-leaguer from last year, will be a versatile player for the Outlaws this year. He’s a left-handed hitter and will most likely hit at the No. 1 or No. 2 spot. Alec started as a freshman, has been in playoff situations, and will bring with him over 50 games of varsity experience. Alec will play in the infield at both shortstop and second base, and will be in the pitching rotation.

Funk is a returning first-team all-league catcher, and will start at that position again this year. Ryan has also been on the varsity squad since he was a freshman, and will be the foundation of the team this season. He hits for power and average and will drive in runs for the Outlaws. Ryan will also see some time on the mound.

Juniors Jake Larson, Jonathan Bertagna, Hayden Parsons, Ryan Cook and Will Werts all made appearances on the varsity squad last year, but will start for the Outlaws this year.

Larson will play in the outfield, and will see a lot of time in centerfield due to his speed. Hodges noted that Jake is a smart player, understands situations, and will bring quickness and speed on the base pass.

Bertagna is a versatile player and will see time at first base, outfield, and also as pitcher. Parsons will play at second base and also have a spot role as pitcher. Hayden is a very good bunter and fielder, and has very sure hands. Werts will see time in the outfield.

Cook will play third base,

outfield, and also pitch.

Hodges said, “Ryan has proven he’s a good contact hitter. He had some key hits for us last year, and coming up from JV to varsity shouldn’t be a hard jump for him.”

Sophomore Zach Morgan returns as a first-team all-leaguer and a first-team all-state pitcher. Zach was a powerful pitcher for the Outlaws as a freshman and will start at that position again this year. He can pitch to specific locations, and he’s developed his off-speed pitch, which really throws off the batters.

“We’re looking for Zach to build on his experience he got as a freshman,” said Hodges. “It was exciting to see his confidence grow as the year went along, and it was because of the success he was having.”

Four sophomores will also join the Outlaws varsity squad: T.J. Lawrence, Taylor Scholl, Jake Stevens and Christopher Luz.

Lawrence will help the Outlaws with catching duties, and will possibly see time in the outfield. Hodges noted that T.J. will gain valuable experience as he trains and works with Funk, and looks for him to continue to improve throughout the year.

Scholl will see time in the outfield, at pitcher and possibly first base. Stevens will see time in the outfield. Jake is one of the fastest players on the team, and will bring his quickness to the game.

“Jake shows a lot of promise and has a lot of tools,” said Hodges. “When those tools get refined we’ll see great improvement.”

Luz will see time at both shortstop and second base.

“Christopher brings quickness, a good arm, and is a good contact hitter,” stated Hodges. “He loves the game, has good baseball instincts, and I think this year will be a break-out year for him.”

Hodges is excited to have several left-handed hitters — Gannon, Bertagna, and Werts.

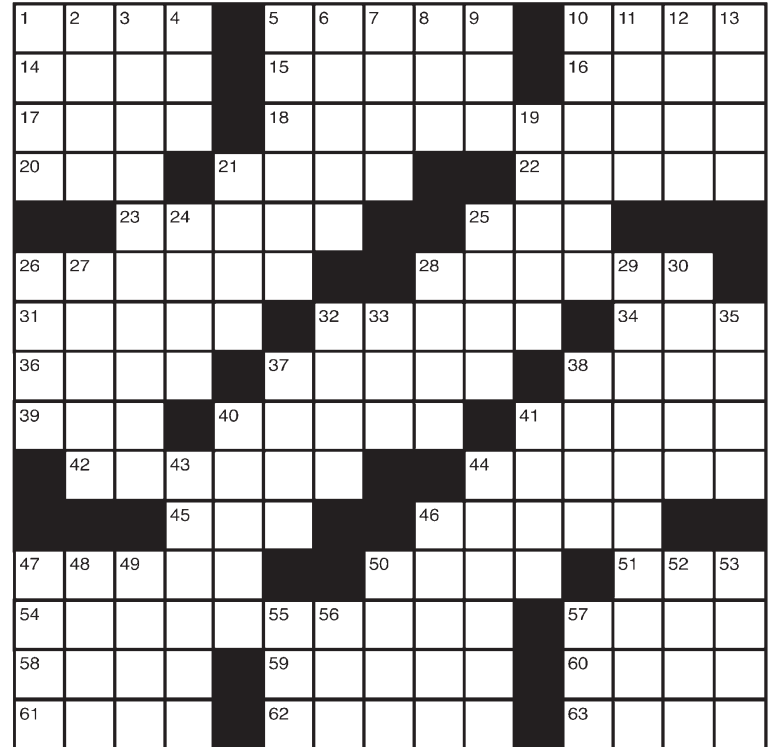
“Left-handed hitters have a big advantage,” said Hodges. “Most pitches come from the right side, so the left-handed hitters see the ball better, and the curve ball comes into their swing, rather than away.”

“We have a lot of guys who are going to have to fulfill the role as pitcher, since a lot of guys that pitched for us either graduated or moved away,” Hodges noted.

The Nugget Newspaper Crossword

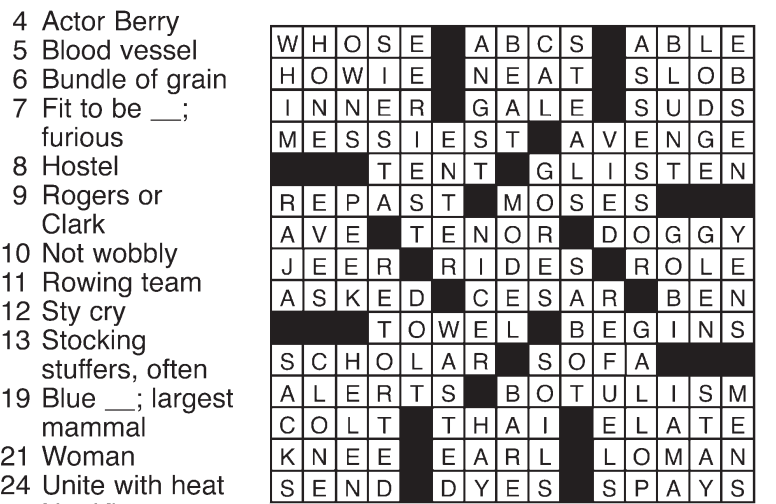
By Jacqueline E. Mathews, Tribune News Service

- ACROSS**
- 1 Set of playing cards
 - 5 Up and about
 - 10 Glasgow native
 - 14 Muscle cramp
 - 15 Horned beast, for short
 - 16 Threesome
 - 17 Other ___; besides
 - 18 Very small
 - 20 Long, long time
 - 21 In the ___; winning, so far
 - 22 Birds of prey
 - 23 Sneezing or Sleepy
 - 25 Womanizer
 - 26 Actress Ally ___
 - 28 Unwanted nasal growths
 - 31 Beaver’s brother
 - 32 Cunning; deceit
 - 34 Groove
 - 36 Very eager
 - 37 Overeat
 - 38 Just; equitable
 - 39 Foot digit
 - 40 Deserves
 - 41 ___ beans
 - 42 Bed for a baby
 - 44 Wearing a disguise
 - 45 Compete
 - 46 ___ a fishhook; attaches a worm
 - 47 Montezuma, for one
 - 50 Obey
 - 51 Fight result, for short
 - 54 Going in again
 - 57 Kitten’s cry
 - 58 Rugged cliff
 - 59 Dive forward
 - 60 Press clothes
 - 61 Donut’s center
 - 62 Prefix for net or action
 - 63 ___ for; requests
- DOWN**
- 1 Go out with
 - 2 Canyon sound
 - 3 Dining room light, often
 - 4 Actor Berry
 - 5 Blood vessel
 - 6 Bundle of grain
 - 7 Fit to be ___; furious
 - 8 Hostel
 - 9 Rogers or Clark
 - 10 Not wobbly
 - 11 Rowing team
 - 12 Sty cry
 - 13 Stocking stuffers, often
 - 19 Blue ___; largest mammal
 - 21 Woman
 - 24 Unite with heat
 - 25 Nat King ___
 - 26 Slap
 - 27 Chaos
 - 28 Greedy people
 - 29 Folks who play practical jokes
 - 30 Hotel booking for a big family
 - 32 VP AI ___
 - 33 Cappuccino container
 - 35 ___ on; trampled



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews 3/30/16

— Last Week’s Puzzle Solved —



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