



EO file photo
Pilot Rock's Jacob Pierce is one of many Rocket standouts returning this season.

Rockets embrace new skipper

PILOT ROCK — Dan Ward may be new to the area, but he's no stranger to the world of 2A/1A Oregon baseball.

A decade as head coach at North Lake in southwest Oregon was plenty of time for Ward to gauge the level of play, and from what he's gathered the Rockets have as good a chance as any team to win it all this season.

"We've got a solid nine players. We've got three solid pitchers and nine kids through the order that can hit the ball," he said. "Any given day I think they can compete with anybody in the state."

The thing that Ward is hoping can give the Rockets the extra edge, though, is their collective speed.

Center fielder Justin Willingham, catcher Dillon Fritz and second baseman Ryle Campbell combined for 50 steals last season.

Opening Day starter Jacob Pierce also swings the team's largest bat and led the Rockets last season with 68 at-bats and a .421 average.

Knights under new rule

IRRIGON — The Knights have handed managerial duties over to longtime area youth coach Randy Henrichs.

Henrichs coached much of the Irrigon roster during their formative baseball years and hopes the familiarity pays dividends on the diamond.

Irrigon has the benefit of returning a strong core of seniors and juniors to aid the first-year varsity coach. Junior Nate Verley and sophomores Hayden White and Austin Rice are expected to handle the majority of the mound work.

Rice in particular has caught Henrichs' eye.

"I'm looking forward to him maturing," he said. "In the next few years he'll be one of the best pitchers in our league — if not this season."

The hope is that the rest of the team will also be ahead of schedule in their development. After a middle of the road 6-8 league campaign last season, the aim is to improve upon that standing this spring.

"They're hard workers. They're putting in the effort to be a good team," Henrichs said. "I look for them to be better this year."

Junior Cougar Kroske is set to shoulder the team's catching duties.

KNIGHT BASEBALL

Coach: Randy Henrichs, 1st year
2014 season: 8-13, 6-8 (Special District 6)

Postseason story: The Knights did not advance to postseason play
Key Returners: Aj Timpy, sr.; Alan Blackman, sr.; Darren Chapman, sr.; Cougar Krose, jr.; Nate Verley, jr.; Austin Rice, soph.



2015 Schedule

Thu., March 19	at Riverside	4 p.m.
Mon., March 30	vs. Riverside	4 p.m.
Tue., March 31	at Dufur	4 p.m.
Sat., April 4	vs. Stanfield	11 a.m.
Tue., April 7	vs. Umatilla	4 p.m.
Sat., April 11	vs. Weston-McEwen (2)	11 a.m.
Sat., April 18	at Pilot Rock (2)	11 a.m.
Sat., April 25	at Heppner (2)	11 a.m.
Tue., April 28	at Grant Union (2)	2 p.m.
Sat., May 2	at Weston-McEwen (2)	11 a.m.
Tue., May 5	vs. Culver	4 p.m.
Sat., May 9	vs. Pilot Rock (2)	11 a.m.
Tue., May 12	at Stanfield	5 p.m.
Sat., May 16	vs. Heppner (2)	11 a.m.

ROCKET BASEBALL

Coach: Dan Ward, 1st year

2014: 13-13, 7-7

Special District 6

Postseason story:

The Rockets missed the state playoffs after losing to Sherman in the second round of the district tournament.

Key returners: Mike

Hiatt, sr., P/1B; Jacob Pierce, sr., P/3B; Dillon Fritz, sr., C; Justin Willingham, sr., CF/1B; Ryle Campbell, sr., 2B

Coachspeak: "We're real solid. We've got a few young links but they've all played a lot of baseball."



2015 Schedule

Tue., March 17	vs Union	4 p.m.
Sat. March 21	at Grant Union (DH)	10 a.m./2 p.m.
Thu., March 26	vs Estacada	11 a.m.
Fri., March 27	vs Joseph	11 a.m.
Sat., March 28	vs Country Christian	11 a.m.
Thu., April 2	at Sherman (DH)	3/5 p.m.
Sat., April 4	vs Dufur (DH)	11 a.m./1 p.m.
Sat. April 11	at Heppner (DH)	11 a.m./1 p.m.
Tue. April 14	at Elgin	7 p.m.
Sat., April 18	vs Irrigon (DH)	11 a.m./1 p.m.
Sat., April 25	at Weston-McEwen (DH)	11 a.m./1 p.m.
Tue., April 28	at Union	4 p.m.
Sat., May 2	vs Heppner (DH)	11 a.m./1 p.m.
Sat., May 9	at Irrigon (DH)	11 a.m./1 p.m.
Sat., May 16	vs Weston-McEwen (DH)	11 a.m./1 p.m.

2014 Special District 6 Standings

	SD6	OVR.
Weston-McEwen	14-0	20-6
Dufur	12-2	23-7
Sherman	9-5	17-7
Pilot Rock	7-7	13-13
Heppner	6-8	10-11
Irrigon	6-8	8-13
Horizon Christian	2-12	6-15
Condon/Wheeler	0-14	1-19

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