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Turning the corner

Lamphere baseball looks to capitalize on potential

By Brad D. Bates
 C & G Sports Writer

MADISON HEIGHTS — The 2008 baseball season at Madison Heights Lamphere was almost perfect.

Unfortunately, “almost” came in the form of a first-round loss in the Michigan High School Athletic Association playoffs.

“We’re trying to get the varsity team back to where it was our freshman year,” senior outfielder/catcher Steve McAlpine said of a return to the heights it reached qualifying for the 2006 Division 2 state quarterfinals.

“Our prospects are to get another league championship, but we really want to get further in the playoffs. We want to make a run past districts and compete for a state championship. We definitely feel we have the talent for that.”

During the 2008 regular season, the Rams took home the Macomb Area Conference Gold Division crown, won 22 games and was ranked No. 6 in Division 2 by the Michigan High School Baseball Coaches Association.

With most of that talent returning with the experience of having their season cut short, coach Adam Wooley hopes that mix pushes this year’s team further.

“Last year’s battles, having gone through what they’ve gone through, bodes well for them,” Wooley said of the positives from last year’s early exit. “What they learned is there is an intensity you have to play with in the postseason, and I think the focus is going to be a lot higher in districts.”

The main cog in Lamphere’s returning talent is sophomore catcher/pitcher Greg Fettes, who took home MAC Gold MVP honors as a freshman.

Fettes returns with fellow All-Conference honorees sophomores infielder/pitcher Ryan Horvath and shortstop/pitcher Mitchell Kozlowski, and junior infielder/catcher/pitcher Paul Lobur to give the Rams a core of talented underclassmen. But it’s the senior class that Wooley hopes will lead the charge.

“Our senior leadership is going to be very key this year,” Wooley said of seniors McAlpine, outfielder/pitcher Jon Kleinert and outfielder/catcher Stephen Murphy.

As the Rams get geared up for the postseason, competing in the new-look MAC Gold should be the perfect test.



Photos by Tracy Dreslinski
 Madison Heights Lamphere senior pitcher Stephen Murphy throws during practice March 25.

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Along with former Gold rivals Marine City High and Warren Woods Tower, the Rams will face Port Huron High, Warren Cousino and Eastpointe East Detroit, which all played in the Blue a year ago.

“We have some familiar rivals and others that weren’t league rivals before,” Wooley said. “I’m looking forward to rekindling our rivalry with Marine City, but also what used to be a non-league rival with Cousino. It should also get us a lot more tournament ready.”

Joining the experienced lineup is junior left-handed pitcher/first baseman Logan Ryan.

“Coming in this spring, he’s crushing the ball, and he’s pitching with a little bit of velocity, so he’s going to help us a lot,” Wooley said of Ryan. “He was a JV player last year that came up and helped us at the end of the season last year at first base. I think he’s come of age, and he’s ready to take over that spot.”

The addition of a left-handed pitcher is the main difference on a roster that accomplished almost all of its goals a year ago, but players like McAlpine see one more difference this year’s team needs that would make them more like the 2006 squad.

“The 2006 team knew they were good, but there were people out there better than them,” McAlpine said. “Last year, we thought we were the best, and we were just going to walk through everything. In 2006, they knew they had to work for and fight for what they wanted.”

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