

SPRING PREVIEW: Cal-Mum softball looking to bounce back from rare losing season; tennis tries to replace solid graduates

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CALEDONIA — To say that the 2019 season was an anomaly for the Caledonia-Mumford softball team would be a massive understatement.

A year after winning the Section V Class C2 title, beating Le Roy in the crossover game and falling in a heartbreaker to Chautauqua Lake in the Far West Regional Final, the Raiders would scuffle to just a 7-13 mark that spring.

Come this spring, the focus for Cal-Mum, as it will for nearly everyone else, will be forced to change a bit.

“Just like most teams, missing last season really set back these underclassmen especially the girls with no prior varsity experience,” longtime head coach Dan Dickens said. “Plus our numbers are a little lower than normal so these girls are being coached up in multiple positions.”

Dickens will be entering his 15th season at the helm and has guided the Raiders program to great heights. For his career he has gone an impressive 252-62, which has included 10 LCAA divisional titles, as well as six Section V championships.

Last season, Cal-Mum lost to Byron-Bergen in the opening round of the sectional tournament, which ended a streak of seven straight sectional finals appearances in which it went 5-2.

Leading the way back will be a number of players with quality varsity experience, including junior catcher Montgomery Kessler. Kessler was a starter at second base as an eighth-grader on the 2018 team that fell 4-3 to eventual state champion Chautauqua Lake. In 2019 as a freshman she hit .317 with six doubles and 10 RBIs and Dickens expects her to be ‘the backbone of the team’ this season.

Also returning will be versatile senior Haley Sherwood. A starter at DP as a freshman and in the outfield as a sophomore, Sherwood will move to first base this season after she hit .311 with 13 runs batted in in 2019.

Moving into the circle this season will be sophomore Maddy Devore. As a primarily centerfielder as an eighth-grader in 2019 Devore led the Red Raiders with 21 runs scored and 11 RBIs, while she also had two doubles and a home run; in the circle she was 1-0 with seven strikeouts in 11 innings with a 4.03 ERA.

"She is naturally more suited for shortstop or centerfield but is pitching out of necessity for us and a true team player," Dickens said of Devore. "Maddy is a solid hitter with speed and power."

Senior third baseman Mackenzie Stetzenmeyer hit only .175 as a sophomore but Dickens says it was a lot of hard luck and he can't imagine a similar season this spring.

Senior outfielder Olivia Woodward and senior second baseman Mary Murphy also saw some varsity action as sophomores. Woodward is a good athlete who will patrol the outfield, while Murphy played in 12 games as runner and scored 12 times in 2018 and also hit .235 in 2019. (Murphy is currently out with an injury but is expected to return).

A collection of junior outfielders should also be in the mix this season in Sawyer Richardson, Taylor Mills, Lizzy Pies, Mackenzie Guerin and Molly Ryan. As a freshman Mills secured the most varsity action as she stole 11 bases and scored 16 runs that season and will be expected to have a more expanded role this spring.

Sophomore Avery DeMarco is going to lead the infield at shortstop and Dickens says she is a 'tough athlete who should be ready to step right in and contribute.'

"(LCAA) D3 should be pretty competitive as Keshequa, York, Pavilion, and Geneseo all have some talented girls on their rosters, it will probably come down to whoever gets more out of their role players and is most consistent throughout the season," Dickens said. "Class C2 has 18 teams in it and hopefully we improve throughout the season and can make some noise come sectional time."

Cal-Mum opened with a 20-9 win over Geneseo earlier this week and is scheduled to play at a tough Avon squad on Friday.