

## Packed and primed

Written by gothenburgtimes  
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### Softball squad set for season full of success

Gothenburg's softball team looks primed for success this season having lost just two seniors from last year's 23-8 team that reached the state tournament for the third year in a row.

"We want to improve on what we did last year," said coach Roger Neujahr.

He's got reason for optimism with a host of key personnel returning including three-year starting pitcher and leading hitter Bre Messersmith, Shelby Eggleston who hit .439 last season as a sophomore, Roni Putnam who batted .383 and stole a team-high 15 bases as a sophomore.

Offensive and defensive standout Vanessa Linegar and Jordyn Haake are both coming off knee injuries.

"Physically we're there," Neujahr said of the girls' recovery. "Mentally is another question."

The team is preparing for the season with two or three people at each position, which is similar to last year when a rash of injuries made it necessary to jumble the lineup.

The coach said he was avoiding saying the "i" word, but he wants to prepare for the possibilities.

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Last season four-year starter Brooke Ballmer missed 12 games and Linegar sat on the sidelines for the final 13 contests. Two other players missed a total of eight games.

“The ‘i’s’ won’t happen to us this year,” the coach said, perhaps more hopeful than confident.

Pre-season practices have been spirited with a positive attitude, Neujahr said.

A comment the Swede coaches heard at a clinic prompted a more up-tempo approach to practices.

“We’ve got to make our practices so that they are game-like speed practices,” Neujahr said. “If you can’t play people like the Beatrices and the McCooks all the time, you probably better practice like it.”

The team has responded to the challenge.

“We’ve had nine practices,” the coach said. “We’ve had seven very good practices, one outstanding practice and one poor practice. If we can transfer those into wins, we’d be happy about that.”

The Swedes schedule has a few Class B teams, but Neujahr would like to play more tough competition.

Although Gothenburg will host the district tournament, the road to the state tourney will go through Cozad. The Haymakers have dropped to Class C and will play in Gothenburg’s district.

“They’ve got a quality pitcher in Carly Henry,” Neujahr said. “They will be a team we’ve got to reckon with and we’ve got to reckon with them the first game of the season. They will be solid.”

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Gothenburg travels to Cozad Thursday for the season opener.

The Swede schedule is undergoing some changes with Chase County dropping softball this year. Gothenburg will travel to St. Paul for one of those dates on Sept. 22. The Swede varsity will host the North Platte reserves on Sept. 29 for a doubleheader at 5 and 6:30 p.m.

Members of the 2008 Gothenburg softball team are (\*denotes letter winner):

Seniors—Ali Abramson\*, - Vanessa Linegar\*, Liz Mat-thies, Bre Messersmith\*.

Juniors— Alisha Ballmer\*, Shelby Eggleston\*, Karen Franzen\*, Jordyn Haake\*, Roni Putnam\*, KaTrina Winter\*, Shalene Winter.

Sophomores—Payton Prall\*, Leah Schwanz.

Freshmen—Amanda Barkmeier, Brittyn Munster, Kayla Ostendorf, Alyssa Salem, Siera Schwanz, Shay Wear, Hanna Wolf, Taylor Wolf.