

M.C. Looks to Winning Season

Dan Kern's First Season at Miller City

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Miller City's Dan Kern, the Wildcat junior varsity baseball coach for the past three years, will be at the helm of the school's varsity squad this season with a schedule of 27 games to look forward to.

The first-year varsity coach said he wants to win three-fourths of the scheduled games this season, commenting "if we can replace the three good players that we lost through graduation last year, we should be able to reach our goal."

Having graduated only three players from the 1974 squad, Coach Kern said Miller City's outlook for 1975 "looks good from what is back on the team again." Kern reported 34 baseballers out for the sport this year and said he and his squad of coaches will be cutting to 31 – out of which both the varsity and junior varsity teams will be composed.

Last year's losses included what Kern referred to as three of their best players in Gary Lammers, Roger Inkrott and Gregg Meyer. Lammers was the No. 1 pitcher and also doubled at shortstop, hitting .359 for the season. Inkrott, the wildcat's No. 1 catcher, came through with a .377 batting average, and Meyer (.304) was at second base, wrapping up a very sound infield squad.

But Coach Kern says he has two promising strong arms on the mound this season with three-year letterman Jeff Franz and Mark Niese, a sophomore with one letter. Kern said both pitchers have good control, with Franz's asset being a good side arm, fast ball and a low curve ball. Niese, on the other hand, experiments a bit more -throwing a good curve and the knuckleball. Kern pointed out that Niese started pitching last year as a freshman, filling in now and then and ending with a 3-2 season record.

Coach Kern is hoping Niese gets the feel of a good fast ball early in the season as he will be relied upon more this year as a top pitcher for the Wildcats. The plan for these two moundmen this season will put one at shortstop when the other is pitching.

Taking over behind the plate will be senior Arnie Brown, replacing Inkrott who graduated.

So far, first and second baseman are up for grabs, while junior Marty Inkrott will stand at third. First base will be filled by either Steve Recker, a junior, or Kevin Lafountain, a sophomore; whereas sophomore Tim Schroeder or junior Jim Schmenk will vie for second base.

In the grass, Ned Inkrott will be covering right field while Mark Noirot will play left field, leaving center field up for grabs between two juniors – Steve McKibben or Steve Lammers. Inkrott is a senior with one letter, Noirot is a junior with two letters, McKibben has two and Lammers returns with one letter from last year.

Also filling in with their pitching abilities will be Recker when he is not at first base and Noirot when he isn't in left field. Both players carry 1-0 records from pitching last season.

While brief mention was made of four returning lettermen, still four others will be back on the Miller City nine this season. They include seniors, Arnie Brown and Jeff Franz – both three year lettermen; Marty Inkrott, a junior with two letters and Mark Niese, the only sophomore with a letter.

Leading the Wildcat's hitting from last year were Brown and Franz with .317 and .306 respective season averages. Coach Kern feels Brown may be the leader this year if he maintains his tempo.

While last season was Miller City's best in many years, finishing 14-6 overall and 4-3 in the Putnam County League (tied with Continental for third) – Coach Kern not only hopes to take home 75 per cent of their matches this season but he has good feelings about the following season already also.

Kern is referring to the large crop of freshmen that turned out for baseball last season.

Sophomores other than Niese, Schroeder and Lafountain on this season's roster include Randy Kuhlman, Jeff Riepenhoff, Chris Rump, Mel Warnimont, Leo Schroeder, Dave Kuhlman, Rocky Steffen, Randy Maag and Nick Inkrott.

Freshman baseballers out this year include Mark Klear, Mike Niese, Wayne Pester, Nick Niese, Dave Cass, Nick Hermiller, Roger Schroeder, Rick Wenzinger, Al Siefker and Steve Palte.

Three other juniors not yet mentioned include Mark Riepenhoff, Tim Fruchey and Nick Schroeder.

Coach Kern and his assistant, Ron Burgel, (also in his first season), look for strong contenders in the PCL from Kalida and Columbus Grove this season. Kern referred to Kalida, the PCL champs last year with a 6-1 record, as the strongest team in the loop and he pointed out that his Wildcats lost two out of three games to the Bulldogs in 1974.

Miller City varsity baseball has 27 games on the schedule this year while the Wildcats JV squad is scheduled for 11 matches.

The varsity Wildcats open up their season tonight at Columbus Grove in non-league action, and next Wednesday they will host Ottoville in their first league game. Game time will be 4:15 p.m.