

• **SOFTBALL**

Continued from page 15

Wheaton North

Coach: Allie Ravanese
Last year's record: 28-7, 12-2 DuKane Conference

Top returning players: Reagan Crosthwaite, sr., SS; Makayla Grantz, sr., OF; Makayla Hammer, jr., OF; Mortiah Herr, so., C; Ava Hartnett, sr., IF; Alyssa Savenok, jr., OF; Hannah Wulf, jr., P; Abby Del Preto, sr., OF/IF; Hana Stoner, sr., OF; Emma Dodge, jr., IF

Top new players: Madison Moore, jr., P; Delaney Surber, so., DH/IF

Worth noting: The Falcons, ranked 12th in Class 4A in the preseason, are coming off a banner season, the program's first conference and regional titles in 38 years and a sectional final appearance that ended with a 1-0, extra-inning loss to Oswego. Leading the way is Crosthwaite, who broke the program's career home run record and hit .455 with 18 homers, 52 RBIs, 51 runs scored and 46 hits and was a second-team All-State pick. Grantz hit .354 with 34 hits, 20 RBIs and 11 runs scored, Hammer hit .287 with six homers, 22 RBIs and 20 runs scored and Hartnett had 18 RBIs and 24 runs scored. "We are

looking to build on an exciting 2024 season," Ravanese said. "So many pieces of our 2024 team are returning for 2025, which is a key factor for us, so we will hopefully take another step further in the postseason."

Wheaton Warrenville South

Coach: Jeff Pawlak
Last year's record: 23-10, 7-7 DuKane Conference, lost to Oswego in sectional semifinal

Top returning players: Presley Wright, sr., P/SS; Abby Mease, sr., CF; Alli Michalowski, sr., 1B; Becca Chaney, jr., SS; Caroline Schulz, jr., OF; Nelia Kirichun, jr., OF

Top new players: Lily Bobor, fr., C/3B; Avery Arnold, so., P/MIF; Rachel Chaney, so., MIF; Ellie Groat, so., 3B/1B; Maria Knorr, so., OF; Cami Bielenda, jr., OF; Kate Hasbrouck, jr., 1B/P; Alli Hubsby, jr., C/3B; Jordyn Wilson, jr., OF; Isabella Franzone, sr., OF

Worth noting: Pawlak said he has some good returning leadership. Wright, who will play in college at Keiser University in Florida, will set the tone and pitch quite a bit while also playing shortstop. Leadoff hitter Mease, a third-team All-State pick and unanimous all-conference pick, hit .471. Michalowski was honorable mention

all-conference and hit .309. Chaney hit .286 with the game-winning hit against Neuqua Valley in regionals. Schulz hit .340 last year. "This is a group that I expect to improve with experience as the season goes along," Pawlak said.

Willowbrook

Coach: Nick Hildreth
Last year's record: 21-11, second in West Suburban Gold, lost in regional final

Top returning players: Allie Copper-smith, jr., OF; Marli Smrz, jr., OF; Sonia Ruchala, sr., IF; Isabel Bates, sr., P/IF

Top new players: Aleena Mcnamara, so., C; Liz Pettinger, so., OF; Adrianna Weaser, jr., P

Worth noting: The Warriors must replace Karman Rowe in the circle, but Hildreth has a good deal of talent back in his second season as head coach. Ruchala, committed to Indiana-Indianapolis, was limited by injuries last season to eight games but hit .600 with eight extra-base hits, nine runs scored and 15 RBIs. Bates batted .424 with eight extra-base hits, 33 runs scored and 32 RBIs. Smrz, third-team All-State, hit .425 with 19 extra-base hits, 35 runs scored and 35 RBIs. Copper-smith, third-team All-State, hit .394 with six extra-base hits, 37 runs scored and 23 RBIs.

York

Coach: Lisa Fraticola
Last year's record: 15-15, lost in first round of regionals

Top returning players: Lilly Burda, jr., SS; Sara Steinecker, so., 3B/OF; Avery Kanouse, sr., P; Maggie Demopoulos, jr., 2B; Morgen Balfanz, jr., 1B; Taylor McMillen, sr., P; Sophia Lancillotti, Jr., P/OF; Nubia Toledo, sr., C

Top new players: Kayla Winters, so., OF; Emily McNichols, jr., OF; Myka Matykiewicz, so., OF/P; Brin Matykiewicz, so., 2B/3B

Worth noting: With five returning starting players and a veteran pitching staff, the Dukes are looking to capitalize on experience. Burda, second-team All-State, hit .464 with a .514 on-base percentage, six homers and 20 RBIs. Kanouse, second-team All-State, hit .343 with four homers and 13 RBIs and posted a 2.28 ERA over 120 innings. Steinecker, third-team All-State, hit .353 with three homers and 17 RBIs. Demopoulos hit .280 with 11 RBIs. Balfanz hit .256 with 11 RBIs. McMillen posted a 3.62 ERA over 61 innings. Lancillotti had a 4.50 ERA over 23 innings. Toledo hit .256 with nine RBIs. "Healthy competition during practices and adapting an attitude of expect nothing, earn everything will push us throughout the season," Fraticola said.

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