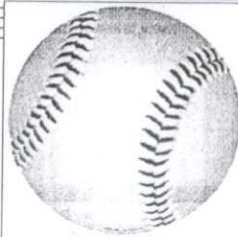


Lake Norman Citizen

Prep baseball,
softball
seasons begin

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March 5, 2010

Your Town ... Your Newspaper

Vol. 1, No. 39

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HOPEWELL TITANS

NORTH MECK VIKINGS

A Cut Above?

Titans, Vikings seek gem seasons on the diamond.

Hopewell Softball

It didn't take Kelly Braman long to pick up where she left off last season as an all-state selection and the player of the year in the ME-CA 7.

Braman, now a senior and a Western Carolina recruit, went 3-for-3 with a home run and a triple in the Titans' 10-0, six-inning win over West Meck Monday. She hit .525, with five home runs, four triples and 22 RBIs last season.

"That just shows complete balance at the plate," says first-year coach Brant Jensen, a 2005 Hopewell graduate who took over for the retired David Webster this year.

Jensen was very pleased to get his first coaching win, one he hopes will mark the start of a successful year for the team that went 15-7 last year and reached the state's second round.

He'll rely heavily on the battery of catcher Braman and pitcher Lindsey Russell, also an all-state pick last year. Russell relies on four pitches and is working on a fifth.

"When you have a pitcher and catcher as good as those two are, it makes everybody that much more confident, that much more at ease," says Jensen.

In the field, first baseman Stephanie Spain (Furman recruit) and shortstop Chaney Watson return. Spain has committed one error in her Hopewell career, while Watson, an all-region selection last year, "has a rifle for an arm," says Jensen.

They can hit, too. Spain batted .452 with 20 RBIs last year, while Watson hit .397.

Abbie Looper, now Jensen's assistant, was a member of Hopewell's state title teams in 2002 and 2003.



Jensen

Hopewell, North teams return lots of talent

By Justin Parker

Featured on the diamond...

At first: North Meck High softball players (from left) Morgan Lashely, Lauren Lewis, Daniela Torres, Sara Allen and Sarah Mooney.

At second: Hopewell High baseball players (from left) Daniel Whitecavage, Keith Prowse, Hunter Conley, Michael Russell and Hunter May.

At third: Hopewell High softball players (from left) Lindsey Russell, Kelly Braman, Stephanie Spain and Chaney Watson.

At home: North Meck High baseball players (from left) Adam Venditti and Cole Wilson.