

2007 Baseball/Softball Preview

Patrician Saints

BASEBALL

Last Year

Lost in Class 2A semi-finals to eventual champion Clarke Prep

Graduated

Brent Bonner, Beau Meeks, Tyler Davis, Brandon Mosley, Jay McNeill, Patrick Lovette, Ryan Houlditch

Outlook

This is an elite program that expects nothing less than a state tournament berth. And with a bolstered pitching staff, that expectation should be met.

PREVIEW

Last season, Patrician failed to defend its 2005 state championship when it lost in the semifinals of a grueling state tournament after running out of pitchers due to imposed pitch-limits and injuries. This year, a return to the state tournament is still the goal, and with three quality starting pitchers in the mix, the Saints are looking to once again reach Selma.

"It is always our goal to get to the state tournament," Saints coach Duane Johnson said confidently. "You have to set goals, ours starts with getting there and then winning it."

During last season's run at defending their title, Patrician basically used a three-man starting rotation with Brent Bonner, Lance Gibson and Barry Meeks. The rotation was good enough to regain the state title until Bonner went down for the bulk of the season with shoulder problems.

By the time the Saints got to the state tournament, Bonner was still not 100% even though he started the final game because the Saints had basically used up all of their pitchers. Although still hurting, Bonner pitched the bulk of the Saints extra-inning 3-2 season-ending loss to Clarke Prep.

Now with Brent Bonner gone, sophomore **Mikell Bonner** appears ready to step into the Saints starting rotation. But, according to Coach Johnson, that still leaves his squad with just three starters and one injury away from being in the same predicament come tournament time this season.

"Right now we only have three starting pitchers," Johnson said referring to the rotation of senior Lance Gibson, junior Barry Meeks and Bonner. "We are going to work toward getting some



Photo by Barr's Photography

more depth in our pitching staff, but right now we are a little thin."

Gibson and Meeks have plenty of experience after starting the bulk of the games last year, but Bonner is basically brand new at the varsity level. **Lance Gibson** has a good fastball with a solid curve that he can place anywhere, while **Barry Meeks** is a left-handed fireballer that can really bring it. Newcomer **Mikell Bonner** is a tall (6-2), lanky righty that can throw lots of different stuff at opposing batters. Bonner's large hands and long fingers give him the ability to throw lots of 'junk' pitches that opposing batters have never seen.

At first base, the Saints have started the season with senior **Neal Cook** in front of junior **Dallas Anderson** and sophomore **Kyle Scott**. Anderson or Scott could see some playing time soon after Cook struggled at the plate in the Saints season-opening tournament in Grove Hill.

Second base will be junior **Will McBride** or senior **Jake Lill**, while either Lance Gibson or Barry Meeks man shortstop, depending on who is

pitching.

At third, ninth grader **Casey Landrum** will get the call if Gibson or Meeks pitches. But if Bonner is the starting pitcher, Landrum will likely move to right field with Meeks manning third.

Senior **Clay Goodwin** will anchor the Saints outfield flanked by seniors **Tony Randolph**

in left and **B.J. Bonner** in right. Landrum, along with sophomore **Justin Brannan**, will also see playing time in the outfield.

Sweetwater transfer **Robert Anderson** will get first crack at replacing the reliable Beau Meeks at catcher, with Beau's younger brother **Brandon Meeks** next in line.

Even though many of the parts may not be in place just yet, Coach Johnson still likes what he sees from this inexperienced bunch that is replacing six starters.

"We do have a good attitude on this team," Johnson finished. "At practice the guys are trying to get better and want to learn."

Colin's Three to Watch

Lance Gibson

Best pure baseball player in Choctaw County. Lance can - and will - play anywhere, including catcher. He's best, however, when at shortstop or on the mound, where he's just plain nasty.

Barry Meeks

Top-flight pitcher with a fastball already in the low-80's, Barry is quickly becoming a feared hurler. He also bats in the middle of the Saints' batting order, where he drives in runs with homerun power and turns singles into extra bases with his blazing speed.

Mikell Bonner

Sophomore pitcher that could blossom into something special in his first year on the varsity. With his 6-2 frame, Mikell has good control over a number of pitches and could turn into a deadly third starter.

Patrician Baseball

2007 Schedule

Feb. 22-24	Gator Tourney	away	TBA
Mar. 2-3	Patrician Invitational	home	TBA
Mar. 6	Pickens	home	3 p.m.
Mar. 8	South Choctaw	home	3
Mar. 9	Wilcox	away	3:30
Mar. 12	Clarke Prep	away	6
Mar. 13	Jackson**	away	3:30
Mar. 16-17	West Ala. Tourney	away	TBA
Mar. 19	Clarke Prep	away	3:30
Mar. 20	Sparta**	home	TBA
Mar. 22	Wilcox**	home	3:30
Mar. 30	Lamar	away	TBA
Apr. 2	Clarke Prep	home	3:30
Apr. 3	Southern*	away	3:30
Apr. 5	Escambia**	home	3:30
Apr. 9	Jackson	home	3:30
Apr. 10	Marengo*	away	3:30
Apr. 13	Marion*	away	3:30
Apr. 14	Marengo Tourney	away	TBA
Apr. 17	Southern*	home	3:30
Apr. 19	South Choctaw	away	3
Apr. 20	Marion*	home	3:30
Apr. 21	JV State Tourney	Linden	TBA
Apr. 24	Marengo*	home	3:30
Apr. 28	First round playoffs	TBA	
	* Area Games **Region Games		

2007 Baseball/Softball Preview

Patrician Saints

SOFTBALL

Last Season

Lost in Class 2A state finals to Tuscaloosa

Graduated

Jessica Norton, Kane Andrews, Emily Harry, Lauren Lewis, Stephanie Russell

Outlook

With two-time defending champ Tuscaloosa Academy moving up to Class 3A, the title is more obtainable than ever for the pitching rich Saints.

PREVIEW

Despite losing a bulk of performers off last season's state runner-up squad, the Lady Saints are still blessed with a bevy of talented players, especially pitchers.

"We have a lot of pitchers, that's for sure," Saints coach Wendell Barr concurred. "With most of them though we don't really know what we've got just yet, but we have

lots of depth at the position."

Senior **Kylie Lewis** and junior **Shayna Jimerson** are anchoring the Saints' pitching staff, with sophomore **Kalyn Hall** and classmate **Codi Stafford** next in line.

Kylie Lewis is the Saints fastest pitcher. She likes to use her speedy fastball to set batters up for an ever improving change-up and curve. Lewis is still bothered by control issues. However, if she hits her spots and limits walks to opposing batters, she's almost unbeatable.

Shayna Jimerson is quickly becoming the Saints most dependable pitcher. Although she doesn't possess the high-powered fastball like Lewis, she does exhibit better control and thus has turned into a very reliable starter. Jimerson throws a fastball, curve and change-up.

Shadowing Lewis and Jimerson are Hall and Stafford.

Kalyn Hall is a power pitcher more in Lewis' mold, while **Codi Stafford** exhibits better control like Jimerson. By the end of the season, however, all four girls should be seeing plenty of innings.

Stafford will also be the first baseman thanks to her solid fielding. Second base will be junior **Allie Roach**, with classmate **Stephanie 'Doodle' Caudle** at short and hot-hitting sophomore **Amber Dobbins** at third.

Allie Roach is probably the Saints best all-around player. She can



Photo by Barr's Photography

play almost anywhere, including catcher, where she will see plenty of time along with starter **Anna Lewis**.

The outfield will be manned by freshman **Tori Walters** in center, senior **Brittany Lewis** in left and **Kalyn Hall** in right. If **Kylie Lewis** isn't pitching, however, she will be in center field where she turns into one of the fastest outfielders in all of the AISA.

All in all, Coach Barr likes what he sees. He even likes the Saints approach at the plate.

"So far I am pleasantly surprised with our batting," Barr said. "We might not have much power, but we have some good contact hitters with great speed on the bases."

Barr is referring to none other than lead-off hitter **Kylie Lewis**. Lewis bats left-handed and is adept at making contact and getting down the line in a hurry.

If **Kylie** hits the ball on the ground, it's very difficult to throw her out at first.

Sophomore **Amber Dobbins** and classmate **Codi Stafford** have shown potential to become power hitters, while **Doodle**, **Allie Roach**, **Anna Lewis**, **Kalyn**

Hall and **Tori Walters** are all making good contact early on.

Barr finished by adding that this team is inexperienced at a lot of positions, a fact that he thinks could be rectified come state tournament time.

"We just need to gain experience during the course of the season," Barr added. "We have a lot of players that haven't played at the state level. So we will have to improve with each game as we fight to get back to Montgomery."

So far so good, the Saints are off to a 3-1 start after beating Monroe, Jackson and Marengo over the weekend. The lone loss came against Class 3A Clarke Prep.

Colin's Three to Watch

Allie Roach

The Saints most polished all-around player, Allie has the fundamentals to play anywhere, but she's best at second or behind the plate.

Kylie Lewis

A speed demon whether pitching or running, Kylie can win games on the mound, where she is the Saints hardest thrower, or at the plate, where she bats lefty and becomes a brutally tough out with her quickness down the first base line.

Shayna Jimerson

Shayna might be the Saints most trusted starting pitcher. She has wonderful control and knows how to work the plate to get batters out. Oh yeah, she bats in the middle of the lineup too.

(I'm cheating, but here's a fourth Saint to watch. Keep an eye on sophomore **Kalyn Hall**. She's an exciting player that makes things happen as a pitcher or on the base paths, where she has been an instant run.)

Patrician Softball

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Mar. 6	Pickens (2)	home	3 p.m.
Mar. 8	South Choctaw	home	3
Mar. 9	Wilcox	away	3:30
Mar. 12	Clarke Prep	away	6
Mar. 13	Jackson** (2)	away	3:30
Mar. 16-17	West Ala. Tourney	away	TBA
Mar. 19	Clarke Prep	away	3:30
Mar. 20	Sparta**	home	TBA
Mar. 22	Wilcox**	home	3:30
Mar. 23-24	Hilltop Classic	Linden	TBA
Apr. 2	Clarke Prep	home	3:30
Apr. 3	Southern*	away	3:30
Apr. 5	Escambia**	home	3:30
Apr. 6	Faith (2)	away	11:30
Apr. 9	Jackson (2)	home	3:30
Apr. 10	Marengo*	away	3:30
Apr. 13	Marion*	away	3:30
Apr. 13-14	Marengo Tourney	away	TBA
Apr. 17	Southern*	home	3:30
Apr. 19	South Choctaw	away	3
Apr. 20	Marion*	home	3:30
Apr. 21	JV State Tourney	Linden	TBA
Apr. 24	Marengo*	home	3:30
Apr. 26	Tuscaloosa (2)	away	3:30
Apr. 30	Cottage Hill (2)	away	4
May 4-5	State Playoffs	Montgomery	TBA
	* Area Games **Region Games		