

Spring Baseball And Softball Seasons Start Next Week

Local high school baseball and softball teams will be playing under lights for the first time this season. Spring practice began last week and some teams are scheduled to play March 1.

Also, new in the 1982-83 season is a junior varsity baseball team at James Kenan high school. Until this season only two East Central conference schools, East Duplin and South Lenoir, had junior varsity baseball squads. Coach Tom McMahon at JK says the junior varsity team will be composed of ninth and 10th graders and carry 15-20 members.

James Kenan
"The coaching staff at James Kenan is very excited about the junior varsity baseball team," baseball coach Tom McMahon said. "We hope the team will provide the boys with some useful experience before joining the varsity squad." The JK junior varsity team plays their first game April 20.

"We have had the most boys turn out for baseball practice this year that I can remember in the past," McMahon said. "The varsity team will have about 13 returning lettermen from last season; we only lost four seniors. And, these boys are a good academic team as the majority of them are in the middle to upper part of their class." The team is young, carrying only two starting seniors, Scottie Smith at first base, and Michael Quinn in the outfield. Practice for the Tigers began February 1, McMahon said, but only four to five days have allowed the team a complete workout due to rain and the concluding basketball season. The Tigers are scheduled to play the season opener March 1 at Southern Wayne High School.

The Lady Tigers will play southern Wayne in their season opener March 4 at home. The James Kenan softball team lost four starting seniors — three infield positions and one outfield.

Coach Sherman Futch said. Eleven members from the fourth place 1981-82 squad will return to the Lady Tigers softball team. According to Futch, the team has held practices about five times and girls playing basketball have not joined the softball team at this point.

"We will have to work hard on our defense and try to keep the other teams from scoring," Softball Coach Sherman Futch said. "As a team, I think we will hit over .400 this season. So far our hitting during practice has looked good and we hit over .370 last season. Last year's leading batter will be returning. Lawanda Southerland hit .530 for the season and led the team in extra base hits. And, Gladys Smith will return and she was hitting over .700 until she was injured in the latter part of the season last year and ended the season with a .400 batting average."

"I don't think any team will go through the season undefeated this year," Futch said. "I think any team could possibly lose two or three games and still be number one." The Lady Tigers finished second last season to a three-way tie for first between Wallace-Rose Hill, Union and Lakewood, which put James Kenan in fourth place.

North Duplin
The North Duplin baseball team is coached by Jim Saint-Amand and begin their season March 12 at home in a game with Princeton. Practice began for the Rebels last week and Saint-Amand will be coaching almost the same team as the 1981-82 team which included no senior members.

"If our pitching game comes through this year we will have a very competitive team," Rebels Coach Jim Saint-Amand said. "We are very optimistic about the season and think the team will be a definite contender for first place this year." Last season the North Duplin baseball team ended the

season with 11 wins and 12 losses.

Coach Ron Taylor says the Lady Rebels will have a stronger season than in 1981-82. The softball team lost two seniors from the starting line. The Lady Rebels lost all but one game last season and Taylor says the team has been concentrating on hitting this year.

East Duplin
"We (East Duplin baseball) will be almost starting over," Panthers baseball

Coach Jerry Thigpen said. "We will have a lot of new boys this season because we lost seven starters. The team will be young, but I still think they will be competitive and improve as the year progresses." East Duplin was the 1981-82 varsity baseball champions with a 13-3 conference record. Thigpen says about 10 players will join the baseball team from the junior varsity squad. The varsity team opens the season away from home in a game with Richlands March 11.

The Lady Panthers began practice last Tuesday. Softball Coach Jerry Hunter predicts a .500 season for the Lady Panthers even though the team lost four starting players from last season.

"Our team hinges on the freshmen," Coach Jerry Hunter at East Duplin said. "We may have as many as

five starting freshmen this year. The team will be very young and inexperienced but the girls are excited about the season. I think the team is weakest in the outfield and pitching, but the freshmen filling these positions have a lot of talent and may be one of the best group of girls the softball team has ever had. In the coming two years, I think the team will grow to be one of the strongest teams in the conference." The girls open in a game at Richlands March 11.

Wallace-Rose Hill
The Wallace-Rose Hill softball team will be defending their conference title this season. Coach Linda Burroughs says the team will be strong again this season after losing only one starting senior last year. Burroughs will be returning as coach after a two-year absence. The Lady Bulldogs were coached the last two seasons by Cathy Tyndall.

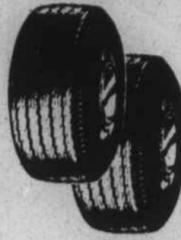
"We work well as a team," Bulldogs Coach Linda Burroughs said. "I don't think there is anyone individual putting out more effort than her team-mates."

This year we have four seniors on the team and some new girls coming up from lower grades and others transferring to Wallace-Rose Hill who will provide help this season."

Cutouts from this year's Christmas cards can make intriguing decorations on next year's Christmas wrappings. Cut out silhouettes of angels, Santas, the Three Wise Men whatever appeals to you.

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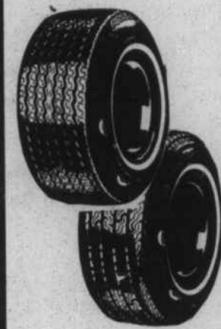


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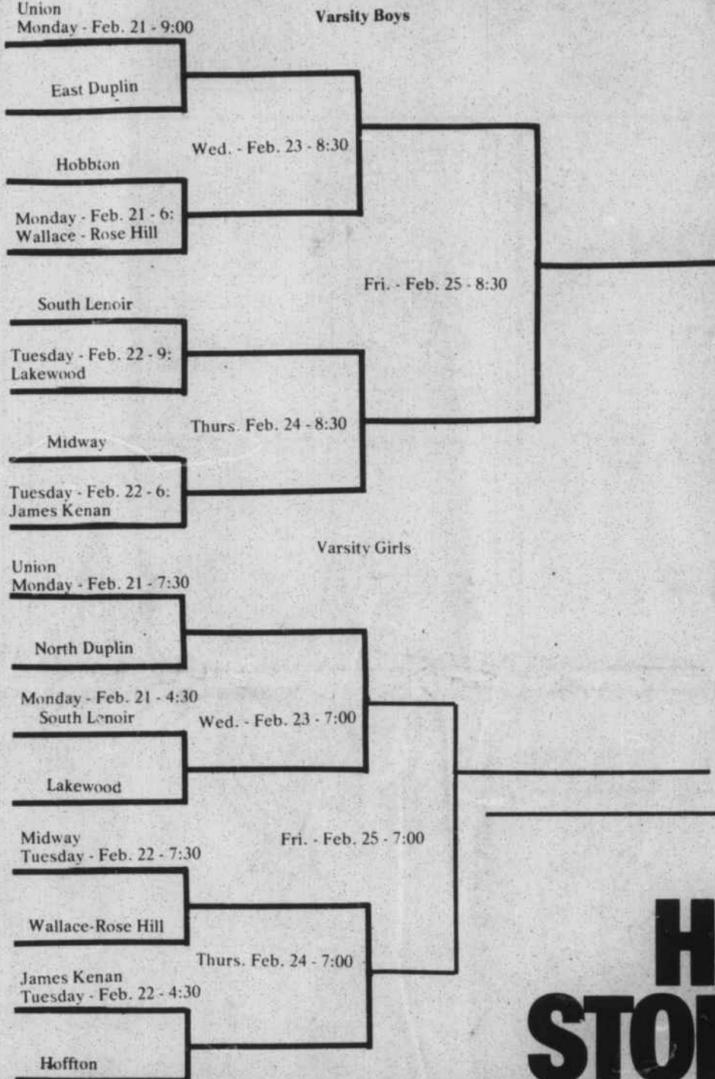
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EAST CENTRAL CONFERENCE BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT 1983



SPRING BASEBALL - Duplin County high schools have begun baseball and softball practice. The James Kenan Tigers started practice Feb. 1. Due to the weather and the winding down of the basketball season, most teams have not practiced more than five or six times, coaches say. Pictured above, Chuck Anderson, a member of the James Kenan varsity baseball team, hits during the practice last week.

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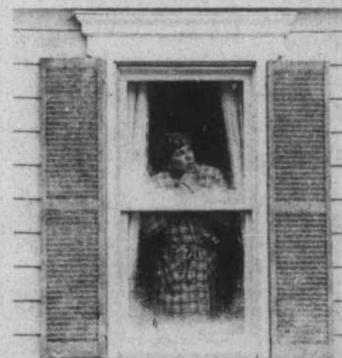
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