

# New baseball season underway with high hopes for playoffs

By Jake Kamman

sports writer

The Oxford High School baseball season is starting up as the Chargers look to play this season to win a state championship and compete at a high level throughout the season.

"I think we will play with a lot more confidence this year," senior pitcher/first baseman Eli Wicker said. "Last year, we had a lot of guys that haven't started before and it took some time adjusting to playing in big time games. This year, we have a lot of guys that played last year, so we know what to expect going in to the year."

Part of the reason towards the confidence in the success for this upcoming year is the depth and the experience of the senior class.

"Our seniors will play a huge role in the success of our season this year," junior pitcher/first baseman Hays Roth said. "Almost all of the seniors will be contributing on the field and their play will affect the outcome of most of the games. If the seniors perform well the team will perform well, and I have no doubt they will carry us to a successful season. Everyone knows about Sam Bianco and

Eli Wicker from their contributions in past seasons but this year other seniors will be in the mix and make a huge impact."

After being knocked out in the quarterfinals to Desoto Central last year, the Chargers want to come back and make it to the top and win a state championship this year.

"I definitely believe we can win a state title," Wicker said. "We all have a very deep pitching staff with all three starters returning. Our lineup will be dangerous and we will score a lot of runs. Every time we step on the field we know we are the better team."

The Chargers are scheduled to play 29 games this year, excluding playoffs, facing many teams they have played in the past. According to Roth, the experience from this years team could send them a long way.

"Probably experience is the big thing," senior outfielder Sam Bianco said. "We had very young team last year, but pretty much everyone that will play this year, played last year and learned a lot from that experience. We have probably the biggest senior class in team history this year with 11 seniors. All of us want to win and we are all devoted to doing what

we need for that to happen and I think that makes a big impact on the younger guys."

As players, most have someone they look up to and craft their game around. For Roth, he has one in his brother Houston Roth. Roth pitched at Ole Miss for three years and eventually was drafted after his junior year to the Baltimore Orioles.

"Obviously I look up to my brother Houston when it comes to baseball due to his success as a pitcher in high school and college," Roth said. "Another person I look up to is Eli Wicker. I look up to him because when I came up as a freshman he was the only left handed pitcher other than myself and we immediately became friends and competitors. We make each other better and we look up to each other and strive to make each other the best baseball players we can be."

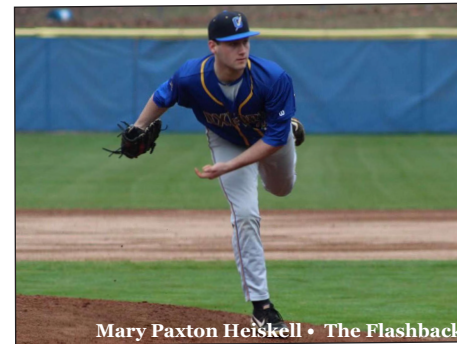
The team is not worried about the rankings or the predictions, they believe they can do whatever they put their mind to, according to Roth.

"I don't think there is a limit to how far this team can go this year," Roth said. "We are a team that can do everything well with lots of guys that can make it happen at anytime. We may not be high up on any rank-

ings but we have the opportunity to prove those wrong, and I truly believe we can beat anyone in the state. The goal is always to end the year holding up a state championship trophy and if we play our best baseball we can make it happen."

The one and final goal of the team this year is to bring home a state championship for the fourth time in school history.

"We have all the elements of a good team," Bianco said. "We just have to go into this season ready to play. I'm looking forward to the memories we are gonna make and being with my teammates. But, mostly I'm looking forward to dog piling in Pearl in May."



Mary Paxton Heiskell • The Flashback

Senior **Eli Wicker** pitches during a home game. Wicker threw a no-hitter against Kosuth in the first game of the 2020 season.

# CHARGERS 20

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