

A soggy but strong open to Lamorinda baseball season

... continued from Page C4

Miramonte

In his second year as the head coach at Miramonte, Kevin Hodges appreciates the foundation set by Vince Dell'Aquila, whom he had coached under: "For 26 years, Vince took the responsibility of building the program and creating a climate of success that many are familiar to seeing on a yearly basis. Each week we are going to be challenged to play at a high level

and on a consistent basis to get back to the NCS playoffs. Consistency is the key to the season along with great leadership from our seniors."

Despite losing six players to graduation, all of whom are playing baseball in college, Miramonte has a number of returning players led by returning starting seniors Joe Hollerbach, Adrese Azzani, Declan McManus and Charlie Mollahan. Hollerbach, the team's captain, is being heavily relied on by Hodges: "Joe

sets the tempo, the mood, the tone and the discipline for the team. He's an extension of the coaching staff." Hollerbach, who will be attending and playing for Cornell next year, will line up at short and third as well as pitching this season.

Miramonte has enviable depth on their pitching staff led by Declan McManus, who had a 3-1 record with a 3.59 ERA and was named 2nd team all-league. Hodges can call upon senior Adam Fahd and juniors Greg Austin, Ryan

Ansel, Jackson Oxner, Nick Watson and Campbell Hoskins.

It's his pitching staff and the play in the field that Hodges is relying on: "Our strength is our defense and pitching. We do have some offensive power but the success of our season is based on our pitching consistency and high percentage (97 percent) defense."

The Matadors have an aggressive attitude on offense, says Hodges: "We like to run

and put pressure on the other team to make a play. When we can, we'll take the 90 feet. We want the kids to be loose, free and aggressive."

With a commitment to get back to the NCS finals, Hodges still tries to keep his perspective: "This is still high school baseball. We want the kids to have fun where they can play in an environment with instruction and discipline."

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