

## Sports

---

### CITY SOFTBALL PREVIEW: Teams set to build off last year

Print Page

By Patrick Donohue, Staff Writer  
[pat.donohue@nonpareilonline.com](mailto:pat.donohue@nonpareilonline.com)

Published: Sunday, May 23, 2010 12:17 AM CDT

A look at the end of last softball season explains why all four city coaches have been itching to get back on the dirt since last July.

Last summer reminded softball fans that anything is possible. Did anyone expect Abraham Lincoln to shock the Iowa softball scene with its surprising postseason upset victory over Lewis Central? Both teams return a majority of their lineups this season.

And what about St. Albert and Thomas Jefferson? Each team addressed a number of areas on both sides of the ball over the offseason, making the Saintes and Jackets teams on the rise this summer.

We won't know for sure what this summer will bring, but a more thorough look at each city team offers a glimpse of what's to come.

The last 10 months have probably seemed like 10 years for Lewis Central.

The Titans were poised to make their second straight trip to the state tournament last summer, that is, until Abraham Lincoln interrupted those plans with an upset victory in the regional semifinals. That's given L.C. all the motivation it has needed during the offseason.

"It's been discussed quite a few times," L.C. coach Don Wittstruck said. "They're ready to go. They want a little more success this year. We want to get back to state this season. They're pretty motivated girls."

Led by Creighton recruit and three-time City Player of the Year Brittnie Kreiser, the Titans return all but two regular position players from 2009. They also return freshmen Morgan Means and Ally Martinez, who played valuable roles in the L.C. lineup last year as eighth graders.

While Lewis Central loses just two individuals, Abraham Lincoln returns all but one regular in this year.

Coach Pat Kroll kept the Lynx competitive last season, despite having only two upperclassmen on her entire roster. Although A.L. finished just 16-18 a year ago, postseason victories over Thomas Jefferson and then state-ranked Lewis Central put the Lynx just one win away from the state tournament last summer.

That postseason run worked wonders for this youthful team's confidence.

"It just propels you because you know you can play with good teams like that," Kroll said. "These kids fought all year long, and I felt like we were on an incline. We just kept getting better, and that's what you want in the postseason."

Kroll lost only Erica Erixon from a year ago, but that created some big shoes to fill in the pitching circle. She threw 224 1/3 of the 227 innings the Lynx played last summer.

Replacing Erixon will be sophomore Michaela Kennedy. A majority of Kennedy's time last season was spent on junior varsity, but Kroll said she's ready for the next level.

Sophomore Chelsea Acosta and junior Taylor Powers are back at the top of the lineup. Each hit over .300 in 2009.

Like A.L., St. Albert has high aspirations this season.

Coach Melissa Fidone brought in Kevin Rose from Bettendorf to teach the Saintes a new hitting style. St. Albert had just one player, Michelle Sneed, hit over .300 last season. Their next-best hitter finished with a .273 average.

"We're now using our hips and pushing through the ball," Fidone said. "We weren't opening our hips up at all, and we ended up on our front foot instead of having your weight on your back foot."

Early signs indicate the players buying into the new hitting philosophy. If the Saintes can get their bats to heat up, they'll be a dramatically more complete team. St. Albert had a respectable .926 team fielding percentage and benefited from the

consistent work of Felicia Campbell in the circle. Campbell threw more than 161 innings last year, earning all seven of the Saintes' victories with a 2.60 ERA.

The team with the most room for growth this season is Thomas Jefferson.

The Jackets won only one game last season, but that hasn't shaken their preseason enthusiasm.

Coach Shannon Stusse sees plenty of potential in 2010, but for any success to become a reality, the Jackets will need more production offensively. T.J. hit just .169 as a team last summer, but with much of the Jackets' core talent returning, highlighted by seniors Kelsey Byers and Allison Sillik, optimism reigns.

"We want to continue to grow as a team," Stusse said. "By doing that, we'll put a lot of things together. As long as we make sure we do the little things, it'll lead to bigger things."

Copyright © 2010 - Southwest Iowa News

---

[x] Close Window