

THE EAST HAMPTON STAR

SHINES FOR ALL

Bonac Baseball Is Back

"We'll be competitive"

By Jack Graves | March 10, 2016 - 12:57pm

Winter gave way to spring this week insofar as East Hampton High School's teams were concerned.

At an awards gathering in the high school's gym on March 2, Brandon Kennedy-Gay (boys basketball), Erik Engstrom (boys indoor track), Gabby McKay (girls indoor track), Christian Brierley (boys swimming), and Axel Alanis and Josh King (wrestling) were named their teams' most valuable players.

Kennedy-Gay, whom the county's coaches selected as Suffolk's small schools player of the year, scored his 1,000th career point during the course of the basketball season. With 1,056, he thus joined Kenny Wood, Howard Wood, Kenny Carter, Marcus Edwards, Mikey Russell, Kyle Russell, Jenel Russell, Jerome Russell, Ed Petrie Jr., Scott Smith, Anthony Miller, Nick Annacone, Hayden Ward, and Terrell Dozier in that elite category.

As for the team, which recently lost by a basket to Harborfields in the county Class A championship game, Bill McKee, its coach, said he was "very proud of their unselfish play, and the fact that four of our kids [Kennedy-Gay, Kyle McKee, Brandon Johnson, and Jack Reese] made the all-league team, which is pretty rare, was a reflection, I thought, of the way they played."

Kennedy-Gay and McKee, moreover, made the all-conference team, and Kennedy-Gay was the top vote-getter among the all-county picks. Regis O'Neil made the all-county academic team.

McKee also thanked Bonac's fans, who, he said, traveled well. As for next year, he said he hoped the returnees would make the new players as welcome as this year's seniors had made Reese, the talented sophomore point guard. "We're going to have to play unselfishly next year — we'll have a young team," McKee said.

Besides boys basketball, girls indoor track, whose members broke 10 records during the course of the season, and boys swimming had strong seasons.

Boys basketball's most-improved award was shared by Johnson and O'Neil. The Roy Mabry award to the team's best defender went to McKee.

Other most-improved designees were Nick Pucci, in boys swimming, Eric Perez, in boys indoor track, and Phoebe Miller, in girls indoor track.

Coaches' awards were handed out to Taliya Hayes, in girls indoor track, Henry Uihlein, in boys swimming, Thomas Paradiso, in boys indoor track, and Michael Pulido, in wrestling.

Engstrom ran in the state meet's 3,200-meter race Saturday at Cornell University, but did not do as well as expected.

"Erik was seeded 17th and finished 24th," said his coach, Bill Herzog. "It could have been owing to a number of factors, but he didn't have a good day. That happens sometimes in running. Sometimes you're on, sometimes



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you're off. Mental, physical. . . ? I don't know what it was. It didn't help that there five weeks between the state qualifier and the state meet. . . He looked good in the first five laps — there are 16 laps in the race — but then he tailed off.”

“He finished in 9:58. The best he's done this year is 9:33. . . . The winner's time was 9:02.”

Engstrom, who plans to run at the University of Massachusetts, in Amherst, and who Kevin Barry, his cross-country coach, has said is the hardest-working runner he's ever coached, presumably was back at it Monday, the first day of spring practice.

As for the team, Herzog said, “Amityville will be the team to beat, though we'll be close with all the others. . . . We could go 5-1, or 3-3. That's how tight our league is.”

Both the boys and girls indoor track teams could expect to lose some of their competitors to other sports — such as softball, baseball, and lacrosse — in the spring, Herzog said.

Meanwhile, the talk is that baseball, following some recent disheartening seasons, is back.

“We'll be competitive,” Scott Abran, Mike Ritsi's assistant, said at the MuvStrong fitness center here Saturday morning. “We may be a couple of years away, but you can safely say we've turned the tide. We only won four games in the past two seasons. Mike and I talked after this past one and agreed that we had to do something.”

East Hampton can expect to have four strong pitchers in Will Mackin, Kyle McKee, Phillip Zablotsky, and Hunter Fromm. “It will come down to how well we hit,” Vinnie Alversa, the junior varsity coach, said.

Abran and Alversa oversaw two teams in the Brookhaven summer league, and one in the fall. In addition, Sunday workouts have been held throughout the off-season, and a group that has included Fromm, Zach Minskoff, Riley Duchemin, Mackin, James Foster, Zach Barzilay, Austin Brown, Jackson Baris, and Elian Abreu has been working out since mid-January with Mike Delalio, Gordon Trotter, and Abran at MuvStrong, which is in the One-Stop complex off Springs-Fireplace Road.

“Baseball is an asymmetrical sport, which can result in overuse injuries, so we've been working on balancing them out so they'll have a healthy, injury-free season,” Delalio said during a conversation at MuvStrong morning.

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MuvStrong, he added, had been working with “kids from all sports — field hockey, football, lacrosse, tennis — from under-13-year-olds to high schoolers. They're becoming stronger and more agile. It's fun to see how much more control over their bodies they're getting.”



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