

# Otters would love to get back to title games

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Oh, would Otter Valley love to recapture the magic of the 2019 spring sports season, the last spring sports campaign that was played in Vermont. That season both the baseball and softball team went all the way to the state finals.

They each lost but it was an exciting spring for OV fans and players.

It's hard to gauge whether or not the Otters can replicate that success in 2021. After COVID nixed the entire 2020 season, nobody is really sure who has what among the area baseball and softball teams. It is the season of the unknown.

**SOFTBALL** Many teams like to ride one pitcher in softball. You might, however, see a number of them in the Otter blue.

"We are really fortunate. We have five pitchers which is unheard of," OV coach Kelly Trayah said.

He names MacKenzie McKay as his No. 1 but Ryleigh LaPorte and Miyiah Hall could get significant innings in the circle.

There are five seniors: shortstop Mia Politano, first baseman Jayden Pope, catcher Josie Cone, second baseman Jessica Maldon and Hall.

Junior Marissa Connors will be at third base.

"She has a strong bat," Trayah said.

Other juniors are Faith Scarborough and Emily Hutchins. Virgil Chapman is a sophomore.

Another sophomore is Grace O'Connell and Trayah is excited about what she brings behind the plate.

"We haven't had a catcher with an arm like this and she has a good bat," Trayah said.

Sydney Gallo lends versatility to the club and gives Trayah some options when he fills out the lineup card.

"She can play anywhere, infield or outfield, and she has a quick bat," Trayah said.

Alexis Hayes will be an outfielder and Bryn Blanchard somewhere in the infield.

Riley Keith is still unavailable following ACL surgery and her absence will be felt.

“I am pretty excited about this group,” Trayah said.

He will have three players from that 2019 team as assistant coaches — Stephanie Palmer, Bella Falco and Renee O’Connell.

The Otters will make the trip to West Rutland on Saturday for the season opener. First pitch is at 11 a.m.

## **BASEBALL**

Alex Polli is back for his senior season and he will be behind the plate for the Otters.

After that, everyone is scrambling for a spot.

“We are still fighting for positions,” coach Mike Howe said.

Other seniors are Lane Eddy, Lucias Sheldrick, Dylan Gaboriault and Parker Todd.

Juniors include Fraser Pierpont, Brady Diaz, Mike Dane, Tanner Brutkoski, Jared Brutkoski and Ethan Blow.

The sophomores are Caleb Whitney, Andy McEnerney, Matt Greeno and Jordan Beayon.

Pierpont and Blow will be the 1-2 punch on the mound and Howe said there are plenty of others who can eat up innings.

“Early in the season, without as much practice, we will have some guys on a pitch count,” Howe said.

Polli will also pitch some and when that is the case, Matt Greeno will take his place behind the plate.

“Jordan Beayon has also looked real good on the mound. He will see some innings,” Howe said.

The Otters lack some of the thump in the lineup from that veteran 2019 team so they will try to score in other ways, putting pressure on the defense by attempting to make things happen on the bases. Hit-and-run and using the speed of guys like Diaz and Whitney will be tools to manufacture runs.

Polli, who will be batting in the middle of the order, is also a very savvy baserunner.

Howe believes the lineup can be productive.

“Some of the guys have looked good hitting in the cage,” he said.

But the pitching will be live soon. The Otters open the season on Saturday at Rutland, just the type of opener Howe relishes.

“I like that we face some of the Division I teams and the better Division II teams early,” he said.

The Otters should find out plenty about themselves very early.