

# OV baseball team happy to be back

04-06-2021, Rutland Herald, by Tom Haley



Rutland catcher Alex Polli (99) receives a throw during a Vermont Summer Baseball League game this summer at St. Peter's Field.

File photo by Jon Olender

BRANDON — Friday was the last day for the Vermont Principals' Association's week designated for pitchers and catchers. It was two days before Easter but it was beginning to feel a lot like Christmas for Otter Valley catcher Alex Polli.

Asked about the Otters' opener on April 17, Polli said, "It's going to feel like Christmas morning. The first time we pull on the Otter Valley uniform, it is going to feel great."

That is because the last time that they donned the OV threads was back in June of 2019 when the top-seeded Otters lost 3-1 to Fair Haven in the Division II state championship game.

COVID stripped away the 2020 campaign and the Otters are raring to go.

Missing a year makes for a different preseason.

"It is a similar approach but it is a little bit scaled back. I know I have kids who have not thrown a ball in 21 months," Otter Valley coach Mike Howe said at the final session for pitchers and catchers.

Full-team practices around the state begin on Monday.

The lost year means that coaches are greeting some players who are a different body type.

“Some of these kids have grown up. They are bigger,” Howe said.

“We have some kids who really love baseball.”

One of those is Polli, the only returning starter from the 2019 club.

“It really stinks that he missed last year because he would have had a great junior season,” Howe said.

There are no scrimmages allowed this season and Howe will use some intrasquad scrimmages to try to sort things out.

“We have eight positions open. I have never said that before,” the coach said. “We are going to try to create some competition.”

He will have plenty of players competing. There are 37 in the program.

Fraser Pierpont and Ethan Blow looked like the top two pitchers after the week ended.

“Ethan pitched in the summer for the modified Legion team. Both love the game,” Howe said.

“We are fortunate. We have 12 to 14 pitchers through the program. We have been working on mechanics and on moving the ball in the zone.”

“Pierpont is really looking good. He will definitely be our ace,” Polli said after catching most of the pitchers throughout the week.

“We’ve got a lot of young guys who love the game.”

Jordan Beayon, younger brother of former OV standout pitcher Josh Beayon, is another who has impressed Polli.

The early portion of the schedule will tell the Otters a lot about themselves. After the opener with Rutland, the Otters face Fair Haven and Burr and Burton Academy.

“We are going through the gauntlet to get started which is great,” Howe said.