

Monroe motors along

Hornets using last year's 17-inning playoff loss as motivation for their first season in the SWBL.

By John Bombatch
Staff Writer

MONROE — The sting from last season's 17-inning regional semifinal loss (4-3 to Metamora Evergreen) is still there for Monroe High's softball team.

"We've been looking forward to this season ever since our last game," Monroe junior right fielder Desirae Baker said. "I think we're just as strong as we were last year, and we're more determined."

Monroe finished 20-5 last season, winning the final Mid-Miami League South Division title. The Hornets joined the Southwestern Buckeye League after the MML folded.

"Some people have told us that they think the SWBL might be a little eas-

ier for our school, but that's not the case, especially in softball," Monroe coach Keith Truesdell said. "I think the teams we'll see are stronger or just as strong as the ones we saw last season in the MML."

The Hornets begin SWBL play Monday at Dixie.

Seven starters return for Monroe.

Jordan Eastham will remain a dominant force on the mound and catcher Megan Short is back as her battery mate. Three of the four infield positions are returning starters — Sara Rossi (second), Megan Beckett (short-stop) and Laura Cain (third). Speedy Tamara Davis and Baker are back in the outfield.

"We're ready to go all the way (to state) this season," Cain said. "We'll be playing harder and faster this time."

Truesdell said he can sense a good change in the team as a result of the Evergreen loss.

"They're hungry. There's a lot more

intensity around here, and it's something we've seen in practices this spring," he said.

Truesdell hasn't determined who the team's new starting first baseman, left fielder or designated player will be to replace the trio of Brandi Hubbard, Kelsey Hatfield and Bethann Marcum.

"But I know we have the strongest bench we've had in years, with seven kids who will either start or see plenty of playing time off the bench for us," Truesdell said.

The coach said Holly Waldron, Alex Tribbey, Ashley and Emily Minotto, Amanda Gross, Taylor Brooks and Nikki Tolson are the ones still battling for the final starting roles.

"I have three seniors (Beckett, Eastham and Rossi) who I know I can rely on to lead this team by example," Truesdell said. "They won't let the rest of the kids slack off this year."

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