

# Examiner Notebook **Baseball**

Compiled by John Keim

## DUGOUT CHATTER

### Oakton keeps rolling

It doesn't matter who comes to the plate or where they're batting in the lineup. The players in Oakton's lineup all do the same thing: hit.

In the last nine games, the top-ranked Cougars have scored 103 runs. On Friday, sophomore reserve Brandon Padula hit a grand slam in a 10-run sixth inning to help beat Westfield, 11-6. Oakton's No. 8 hitter, freshman shortstop Alfredo Rodriguez, is batting .545. Eight players with at least 25 at-bats are hitting over .300 and eight players have homered.

"We seem to capitalize when other teams make a mistake," Oakton coach Scott Rowland said. "But we're a beatable team and the players know it."

Oakton hasn't been slowed by junior first baseman Chris Despina's absence. Despina, a .320 hitter, injured his knee and will miss at least another month. Senior Rollin Lynn — who volunteered to serve as a pinch-hitter most of the season — was inserted into the lineup. He's hitting .353 with six RBIs; his three-run homer against Herndon last month snapped an 8-8 tie.

Senior Preston Madden, who started the year at shortstop and agreed to move to second so Rodriguez could play, volunteered to play first base in Despina's absence. He also said he'd play in left field to get Lynn into the lineup.

"When you have two seniors like that, then everybody else buys into it," Rowland said.

### 'Just a little team that could'

Mount Vernon's regular season could come down to a coin

flip: The Majors are tied with Edison for first place in the National District. Because the teams split two games and all the other tie-breakers are equal, if both teams win their final three district games, a coin toss would determine the tournament's top seed.

The Majors (13-3, 7-2 district) put themselves in that position with a 3-2 win over Washington-Lee on Friday, behind junior pitcher Chad Eagerton.

Eagerton is 8-0 with a 1.04 ERA — 68 percent of his pitches are strikes. Senior John Early is 2-1 with a 2.52 ERA. Meanwhile, junior Ryan Stearns is batting .491 with five homers and 23 RBIs, while senior Tyler Martin is hitting .371 with five homers and 18

RBIs.

"We're just a little team that could," Majors coach Jim Linza said. "We're doing it all within the team framework."

### McLean's McDonald leaving

McLean's nine seniors aren't the only ones who want their final season to end in positive fashion. So, too, does the Highlanders' coach, Joe McDonald.

He told his players last month he's leaving after the season, his fifth as head coach and ninth in the program. He and his wife and their two children, ages 19 months and 2 months, are moving to State College, Pa. Both McDonald and his wife, Maria, are from Pennsylvania.

The Highlanders were 10-4 overall and 7-3 in the Liberty District entering Monday night's game against W.T. Woodson.

"It's tearing me up because this is what I love," McDonald said. "I love the school and the kids, but I have to put my family first."

Lee's Troy Hamilton is leading the Lancers' offense.

— Jeff Mankie/Examiner



## SCOUTING REPORT

### Troy Hamilton • Lee Senior • shortstop/second baseman

After hitting .365 as a junior, Hamilton, a three-year starter, has become Lee's top offensive threat. He leads the Lancers (10-5) in hitting (.500), home runs (seven), hits (26) and RBIs (21) — after a three homer performance Monday night against South Lakes. One reason: He spent more time in the weight

room this offseason.

"You used to be able to get him out on off-speed pitches," Madison coach Mark Gjormand said. "Now he can hit the breaking pitch and the changeup. He's more patient and his hands are electric. He's a tough out. He's just a big kid with a lot of power. He's a great high school hitter."

## TOP FIVE

Rank. School (Record)

### 1. Oakton (12-3)

Last game: Beat Westfield, 11-6, Friday. Next game: Tuesday at Herndon, 6:30 p.m.

### 2. Paul VI (21-2)

Last game: Beat McNamara (Md.), 12-1, Thursday. Next game: Tuesday vs. Flint Hill, 6 p.m.

### 3. W.T. Woodson (12-4)

Last game: Monday vs. McLean. Next game: Tuesday at South Lakes, 6:30 p.m.

### 4. Robinson (12-4)

Last game: Beat Lake Braddock, 5-3, Friday. Next game: Wednesday at T.C. Williams, 6 p.m.

### 5. Langley (13-3)

Last game: Monday vs. Madison Monday night. Next game: Tuesday vs. Marshall, 6:30 p.m.

Note: Records through May 1

## GAME OF THE WEEK

### No. 5 Langley at No. 3 W.T. Woodson 6:30 p.m., Friday

Woodson entered Monday night's game against McLean with a one-game lead over Langley in the Liberty District.

Langley had won seven of eight before Monday night's game against Madison. The Saxons are using senior pitcher Jimmy Saris (4-0, 73 strikeouts, 37 innings) mostly in relief — for now. Saris and senior Chuck Eller lead the offense, batting .469 and .478, respectively. Both

have 12 RBIs. Junior Danny Brown has five hits in his last three games.

Woodson senior Ross Taranto, who might pitch Friday, has rebounded from shoulder problems that limited him last season. He's 5-0 with a 0.97 ERA. Mike Bianucci (4-1, 2.03) is another possibility on the mound. Senior Jim Gibbons had four hits Friday and now is hitting .400 with a team-high 18 RBIs.