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New-look Pine-Richland softball team looking to put it all together

By Jerin Steele March 25, 2023



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[Pine-Richland](#) softball coach Sam Hartzberg was looking out at the field during Monday's season opener against [Chartiers Valley](#) and it hit him how different the team looks this season.

The Rams return four starters, but they are a youthful group that will look to build off a 12-5 season where they made a run to the WPIAL Class 6A semifinals.

"We're very young," Hartzberg said. "We are mainly sophomores and juniors and there'll be some freshmen playing as well, like we did last year. Although we have four returning starters, one of them,



Sul catcher Calle Henne, a sophomore.

Two of the other three returning starters occupy the left side of the infield. Mackenzie Gillis is at third base and Marissa DeLuca occupies shortstop.

DeLuca was second-team all-state last year.

Jocelyn Langer will anchor the outfield in center. Langer quickly became known for her defensive prowess last season, making some spectacular catches, including a diving snag after a long run that sealed a 5-4 win over [North Allegheny](#).

All four returning starters are juniors and give the team a strong backbone.

"Jocelyn is super-fast and aggressive. She puts on her game face and you just get out of the way," Hartzberg said. "She plays hard all the time. Marissa DeLuca is very similar. She doesn't have the same game face as Jocelyn on the outside, but internally she does. She's a pitbull out there. Those two are tough and so is Mackenzie Gillis."

Sulesky will be joined by DeLuca, Mia Maiola and Maura Flynn on the team's pitching staff. It'll be an adjustment after relying on Aughton to eat most of the innings a season ago.

"Izzy will be our go-to for sure," Hartzberg said. "She'll be our starter. DeLuca was a pitcher in the past and she started to work on pitching again over the winter. Mia has been working hard at it. She hasn't been a pitcher her whole career and neither has Maura. Maura was mainly a catcher and hasn't really pitched since she was 10, but those girls have stepped up because they know we need some help there. Izzy can't throw every inning of every game."

Sophomore Iliana Aggelou slots in at second base. Keep an eye on freshman Serafina Julio, who will be in one of the corner outfield spots.

The Rams fell in their season opener, 14-9, against [Chartiers Valley](#). The positive was how well the team hit against a Colts team that figures to be near the top of Class 4A. Some errors in the field hurt the Rams' cause.



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because it's a very different team out there."

Another unique aspect to 2023 is that all nine Class 6A teams will play in the same section. Joining the Rams in 6A are [Baldwin](#), [Butler](#), [Canon-McMillan](#), [Hempfield](#), [Mt. Lebanon](#), [North Allegheny](#), [Norwin](#) and [Seneca Valley](#). The top six are guaranteed a playoff spot.

"They're all good teams," Hartzberg said. "Pretty much everybody has strong points. It's going to be a tough section."

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