Lady Bears Begin Title Defense

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Erik Wander/KMXT

The defending small school state softball champion Kodiak Bears team opened their 2009 campaign with a lopsided loss Thursday. However, the team's coach says there is no cause for alarm, as the Bears continue the young season.

Kodiak dropped a 10-2 decision to Sitka Thursday, beginning their defense of their state title much as last season began, with a loss to Sitka. Head softball coach Dave Allen said Sitka is one of the best hitting teams around, and that starting a rookie pitcher against them presented no small challenge.

-- (Allen 1 44 sec. "We went against I think ... their hitting capabilities.")

Allen said the Kodiak team learned the value of a changeup in the season-opening game, saying that they started employing the pitch much too late in the game, while Sitka was making effective use of it throughout. He did see bright spots in his team's hitting, however.

-- (Allen 2 22 sec. "They kept us off balance ... but it didn't.")

Allen says the thought never enters his mind that his team is defending a title.

-- (Allen 3 14 sec. "We're just trying to ... did a pretty good job last night.")

Aside from the team's defensive strengths, Allen says that pitching will come with

experience for its young staff, which lost its best pitcher from last season. Allen is also confident offensive production will pick up, much as it did last season, when the team dropped some games early, only to improve steadily as the season progressed.

-- (Allen 4 22 sec. "We need to give our pitchers ... some miles down the road.")

Aside from Sitka, Allen pointed to South Anchorage as a team to watch out for given their outstanding hitting. He said the season promises to be an exciting one, and that he likes to play against the tougher teams, which fosters improvement across all aspects of the team's skills and experience.

-- (Allen 5 22 sec. "We have a variety of ... gives us the best experience.")

Returning for the Bears this season are some of the team's best offensive regulars from their championship season, including Janelle Tirona, Heather Carlson, Emily Garner, Cimone Trout and Addie Jones, all of whom hit over three hundred last year. The team was scheduled to face Sitka again and South at home Friday and Sitka yet again Saturday. The season continues with ten more games, the final eight of which will be played on the road.

I'm Erik Wander.

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