

# BC3's shored-up defense in diamond may lead to victories

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Members of Butler County Community College's 2019 baseball team are, top row, from left, Grant Clawson, James Flemm, Luke Heade, Jacob Jewart and Tyler Johnson. Middle row, from left, Matt Kerr, Shane King, Connor Miller, Dominic Pasquale and Jake Slomers. Bottom row, from left, Noah Smithbauer, Jacob Somerville, Jace Stutz, Joel Stutz and Jake Swope.

(Butler, PA) An improved defense will be key for the Butler County Community College baseball team, which has strengthened its middle infield with freshmen Jacob Jewart at shortstop and Dominic Pasquale at second base, head coach Steve Boyd said.

That's important for a Pioneers team that finished 1-15 in 2018 as a result of costly errors, Boyd said.

“It affects your pitching more than anything,” Boyd said of the miscues. “You put more stress on the pitcher. The more mistakes you make, the more pitches the pitcher has to throw.

“The players would make fantastic plays, the routine plays, and then all of a sudden, what was that? We didn’t win very many games last year, primarily because of the defense.”

Jewart is a graduate of Moniteau High and Pasquale, of Seneca Valley High. They will be flanked in the infield by third baseman Grant Clawson, a freshman and Butler High graduate, and first baseman Tyler Johnson, a sophomore and Armstrong High graduate.

“Pasquale looks really good,” Boyd said. “He looks like a ballplayer, acts like a ballplayer and carries himself like a ballplayer. Jewart is about as good as it gets too. He has an acumen for baseball. He knows what is going on.”

Johnson and Clawson are also among a five-man pitching rotation that includes Luke Heade, a freshman and Butler High graduate; sophomore Shane King, a Laurel High graduate; and Jewart, assistant coach Chris Monaco said.

All are right-handers.

“If we can fill the strike zone up with strikes,” Monaco said, “then we are going to be OK, whether it is a righty or a lefty.”

Johnson, Boyd added, “is a bulldog. He will battle you.”

Johnson appeared in seven games in 2018 and led the Pioneers with 17 1-3 innings pitched. He fanned six and walked 15.

“I need to keep runners off the bags more,” he said. “No walks. No free passes. Stay ahead in the count.”

The Pioneers return right fielder Joel Stutz, a Butler High graduate who led BC3 with a .400 batting average and an on-base percentage of .471; and center fielder James Flemm, a Freeport High graduate who topped BC3 with 20 hits, seven doubles and two triples and was BC3’s second-leading hitter with a .377 batting average. Jake Slomers, a freshman and Butler High graduate, may start in left field, Boyd said, adding that Jace Stutz, a sophomore from Butler High, and Jacob Somerville, a freshman from Butler High, will see time in the outfield.

Jake Swope, a freshman and Neshannock High graduate, will be BC3’s catcher, Boyd said.

The Pioneers are chasing their first Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference title since 2005 and fifth overall. They have finished as the tournament runner-up 12 times.

“I think we will be able to surprise some people this year,” Jewart said, “and do a lot better than people expect.”

“We definitely have some athletes out here,” Pasquale said. “And that is what we need.”

But the key, King said, will be “not making errors like we did last year.”

BC3’s roster also includes Matt Kerr, a sophomore and Shenango High graduate; Connor Miller, a freshman and Butler High graduate; and Noah Smithbauer, a freshman and Slippery Rock High graduate.