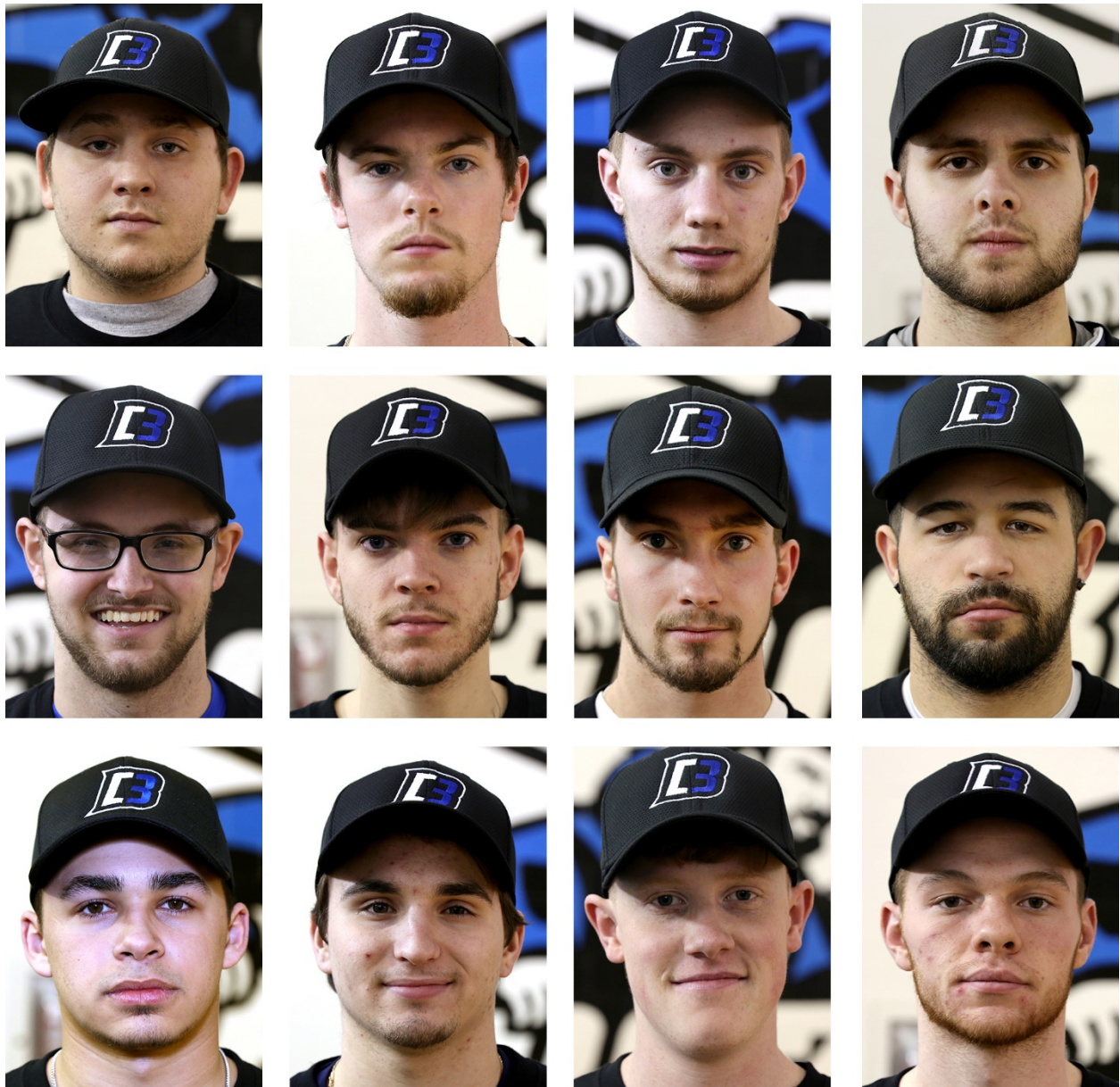


WPIAL sensation could be a hit for BC3

Pioneers look to bounce back from 5-8 season behind Freeport's Flemm

March 8, 2018



Among members of the 2018 Butler County Community College baseball team are, top row, from left, Tim Butler, Slippery Rock; Kyle Mudger, Cochranon; James Flemm, Freeport; and Matt Cornetti, Knoch. Center row, from left, Tyler Johnson, Armstrong; Matt Kerr, Shenango; Jeff Smolen, Knoch; and Shane King, Laurel. Bottom row, from left, Marcus Lantz, Karns City; Aaron Marterella, Moniteau; Bryan Peterson, Shenango; and Conner Thomas, Butler.

(Butler, PA) Members of the Butler County Community College baseball team say they are poised to snap the program's string of five consecutive losing seasons with the return of six starters – and with the addition of the Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League's second-leading hitter in 2017.

BC3 head coach Steve Boyd and his squad, which jumped to a 4-1 start last year before ending 5-8, have high hopes for freshman James Flemm, who in 2017 batted .609 in the regular season for Freeport High, an average second to only Ben Visnesky's .615 for Serra Catholic among players on 129 WPIAL teams.

"I have seen him in batting practice, and he does hit the cover off the ball," sophomore shortstop Aaron Marterella, a Moniteau graduate, says of Flemm.

Flemm was also third in the WPIAL with 33 RBI, had 21 extra-base hits and struck out only three times in 72 plate appearances.

"When you have that many extra-base hits and you don't strike out, I really don't know how you pitch to a player like that," Freeport head coach Ed Carr said. "It was probably the single-most impressive statistical year I have ever seen. He can absolutely take over a game. What he did last year was not a fluke."

Flemm, a right-handed pitcher, finished 5-3 with a 1.89 ERA for Freeport.

"Last year I had a lot of success in high school," Flemm said, "so I feel like I have a lot of pressure on me."

But, Boyd said, "If he can do anything like he did last year ... He just lit it up. He does everything well."

Flemm may lead a pitching rotation that includes freshman right-hander Tyler Johnson, of Armstrong, sophomore right-hander Isaiah Glass, of Fairview; and freshman left-hander Conner Thomas, of Butler, Boyd said. Right-hander Shane King, a 22-year-old former Marine and Laurel High graduate – and BC3's "hardest thrower," Boyd says – will anchor the Pioneers' bullpen.

First baseman Matt Cornetti, second baseman Kyle Mudger, outfielder Bryan Peterson and catcher Jeff Smolen join Glass and Marterella as returning players. Cornetti is a graduate of Knoch; Mudger, of Cochranton; Peterson, of Shenango; and Smolen, of Knoch. Sophomore Tim Butler, of Slippery Rock, joins freshmen Josh Adamson, of Moniteau; Matt Kerr, of Shenango; Jace Stutz and Joel Stutz, of Butler; and Marcus Lantz, who batted .362 with 22 RBI and scored 16 runs in 2017 for Karns City.



Steve Boyd is entering his 20th season as head coach of the Butler County Community College baseball team.

“I like the group of kids we have assembled,” says Boyd, entering his 20th season at BC3 and whose squad is seeking BC3’s sixth Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference title and first since 2005. “They are taking this as seriously as a job.”

Mudger and Marterella notice.

“You can tell in the air of practice that there is a lot more focus,” Mudger says. “I can feel it. I’m very excited about it.”

And Marterella: “This year there is a lot more uptick. We are really working hard. We have more of a strategy going forward in practice. We come in knowing what we need to get done. And we get it done.”

BC3 is scheduled to open its 2018 season by hosting Finger Lakes Community College, Canandaigua, N.Y., in a doubleheader that begins at noon Sunday.