

Brewers? revamped pitching rotation part of Bolton?s plan to avenge last year?s Game 7 loss in NDBL finals]

Spring / Summer Sports Preview

By Jim Stewart

Bolton Head Coach Mike Wallace and his Brewers have been busy all winter at the Baseball Zone in Mississauga to create better outcomes in 2023.

The veteran player-coach is also hoping for better health for the Brewers so they can finish championship finals with more joy and less sorrow.

The Brewers earned their way to the 2022 NDBL Championship Final, but lost in Game 7 to New Lowell. Bolton also scratched its way into the finals of both the major tournaments they participated in, but lost both championship finals. Three close calls have made the Brewers a hungry ball team that wants to win its big games in 2023.

To that celebratory end, the Brewers have imported a fresh influx of arms, thus adhering to the old baseball adage that you ?can never have enough pitching.? Coach Wallace introduced the new arrivals to his staff and discussed the key returning Brewers in his pitching mix.

?We've added some top-end pitching. Aaron Dzib and Eddie Rodriguez both played professionally in Mexico. Sheldon Gowan, a Barrie native, is a hard-throwing left-hander who will join the Brewers' rotation as well.?

With the ?return of Trent Barwick, Victor Moguel, Nick Pettinaro, Shawn Chalmers, Mike Blackwood, and Brett Chater to the mound this season,? Wallace believes that he has ?one of the best pitching staffs in the league.?

He also noted that younger Brewers will begin to complement his veteran squad with ?some youth and we will see Brayden Grech, Cameron O'Neil, Logan Hart, Mario Accardo, Daniel Amodeo, and Josh Catalanotto getting into the action.?

All in all, Coach Wallace believes that due to the Brewers' acquisitions and off-season regimen, ?the ball team is looking great this season. Last year, a few players were injured for majority of it, but it looks like Drew Vokey and I will be ready to go at the start of the season.?

The Brewers' skipper assessed the 2022 season as ?a challenging season, but a very successful one.?

He noted that key injuries took their toll on the team up-the-middle.

?The challenging part was myself (as the second baseman), Brett Chater at shortstop, and Drew Vokey our centerfielder were all injured and missed significant time. However, with these major injuries, we saw a great season and leadership from Carter Burnside who won the league's Top Catcher Award. Amin Juarez (shortstop/ third base), Josh Hickey (first/3rd baseman), Chris Fafalois and Daniel Accardo in the outfield, and Greg Keenan at second base all had tremendous seasons with the bat and glove and did the bulk of the heavy lifting all season.?

Wallace also praised his 2022 pitching staff, adding, ?On the mound, Trent Barwick and Victor Moguel were excellent down the stretch and in the playoffs. Shawn Chalmers and Nick Pettinaro also had an excellent season on the mound for the Brewers.?

The combination of steady hitting and pitching allowed the Brewers to mitigate the impact of their long list of injuries and the team accrued an outstanding .739 winning percentage in the NDBL, based on a 17-6 regular season record.

Coach Wallace reflected on the team's final game of the 2022 season: ?Drew Vokey returned for the Finals and caught fire with John

Hutchinson, Steve Warden, and Mike Wallace. They helped the Brewers pound out 12 hits in game 7, but we ended up losing 3 to 2 to New Lowell.?

Prior to being edged in Game 7 by the Knights in the NDBL finals, Bolton started their trek to the championship final by beating Barrie 3 games to 2 in Round 1. The Brewers then defeated the Ivy Rangers 3 games to 2 in the semifinals. The Brewers also entered two tournaments, and earned their way to the championship game in both. However, Bolton lost to New Lowell in the Lisle tournament and lost again to New Lowell in the New Lowell tournament. Avoiding injuries and overcoming their nemesis New Lowell will surely be the battle cry of Coach Wallace's Brewers this season.

Wallace has been a mainstay with the franchise and reflected on his multi-decade career as a Brewer: ?I have been coaching and playing for the Bolton squad close to 20 years now. I love the game and I love that I am able to represent my town that I grew up in. I'm fortunate enough to play and coach with a tremendous bunch of players who play the game the right way and will give it everything they've got.?

When asked about prognostications for the 2023 season, the veteran coach leaned toward a favorable outcome for his ball club.

?I think this is one of our strongest teams that we have had. Hopefully, we can have a healthy season. Our group is pretty motivated after coming so close last season. With some extra arms and some positional depth, I think we should be a very strong team this year. We just have to stay healthy.?

An influx of pitching talent and better health may, indeed, be the championship-winning recipe for the Bolton Brewers in 2023.

The Brewers play on the North Hill Diamond #1. They play their home games at 7:30 p.m. on Thursdays.

The league website is [NDBL.ca](#) where residents can follow all the standings/player stats and schedules.