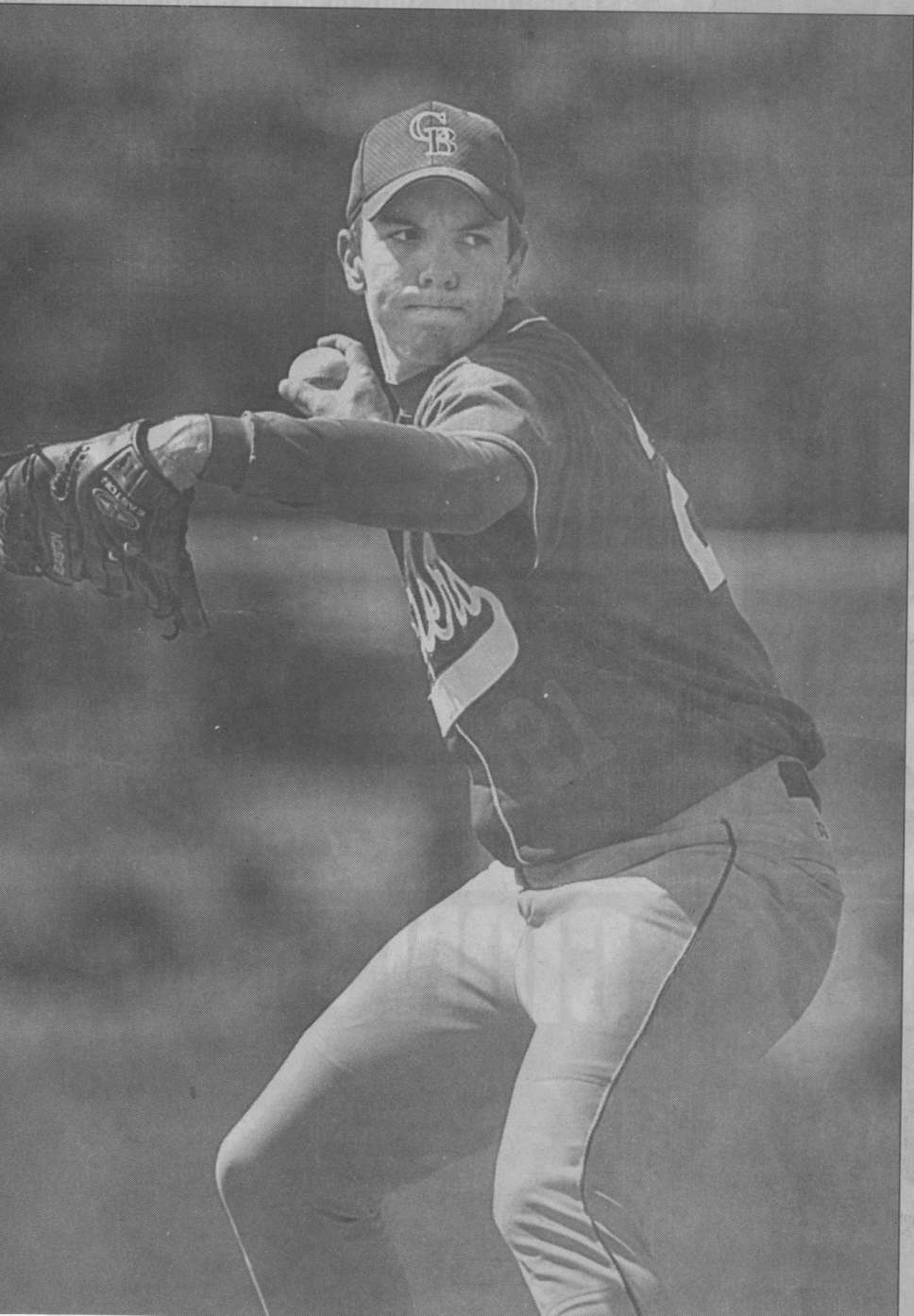


3/25/04

Profile: High school baseball



Christian Brothers returning all-league pitcher Paul Peletta, who was 7-1 last season, is a key player if the Falcons are to win their third consecutive Sierra Valley Conference title. CBS lost All-City first-teamer Jordan Karnofsky and second-teamer Jason Harris from last year's team.

Sacramento Bee/
Renee C. Biver

NO DIAMOND IN ROUGH

First-year coach Ryan Case thinks much of Del Campo's bench could start for other area teams

By Mark McDermott
BEE STAFF WRITER

Ryan Case has inherited a Del Campo High School baseball team he describes as "a coach's dream."

Now the first-year coach deals with the reality that there is no way to go but down.

The Cougars (8-1) are loaded with depth and young, quality players. For most games, they start three juniors, three sophomores and go 12 deep.

"This is a coaching dream," said Case, a Cougars assistant last season under interim coach Dave Nobis. "Talent-wise, you couldn't ask for a better team. We have guys on the bench that would be starting on any other team. We've had to cut guys who deserved to be on a high school team. On the other hand, it's a nightmare trying to play everybody."

Nobis, an emergency fill-in last season after a previous first-year coach was fired, led the Cougars to the Sac-Joquin Section Division II title game, where they lost to Capital Athletic League rival Casa Roble 6-5.

Leading the way is All-CAL pitcher-shortstop Matt Couch, a two-time second-team All-City player.

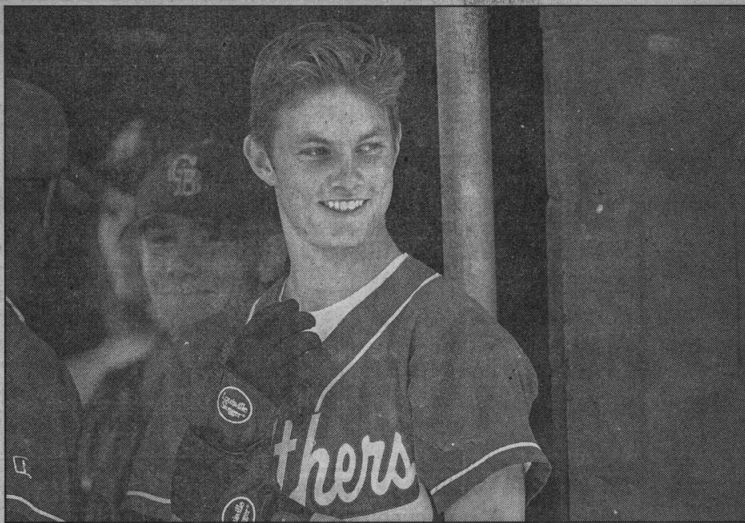
"Matt's the most composed high school player I've ever been around," Case said. "He's a natural leader. Whatever he does, the rest of the team is sure to follow."

Those youngsters following that lead include junior outfielder-pitcher Ryan Stevens, second baseman-shortstop Miles Morissette, outfielder Jeremy Baxter, infielder Chad Hernandez, third baseman Matt Greenly, sophomore catcher Jesse Olsen, first baseman Chris Johnson and catcher Codi Boek. Stevens is a returning All-CAL player, and Johnson's brother, Gary, was The Bee's Player of the Year in 2002.

Outfielders Kelsey Weber and Ken Stivers join Couch as the team's veteran senior leaders.

To win the CAL crown and section title, the Cougars must get past Casa Roble, which four times beat them by one run in 2003.

"I told the juniors after that section loss



Coming into the week, Christian Brothers outfielder Ryan Magill was hitting .385 with 22 RBIs. The Falcons had a 6-2 record after a 6-4 loss to Cordova on Monday.

to Casa Roble to let it gnaw at you," Case said.

It has.

In the first matchup of 2004 last Thursday, Del Campo pushed across a run in the bottom of the seventh to win 5-4. Couch tossed a four-hitter, and the Cougars had 11 hits.

Here's a look at some of the area's other leading teams, in alphabetical order, with records through Monday:

Christian Brothers (6-2) – The Falcons return all-league P Paul Peletta (7-1) and OF Ryan Magill (.385, 22 RBIs) and seek their third consecutive Sierra Valley Conference title. Coach Joe Gill expects C Greg Gonzalez, SS Nick Nunez, 3B Cory Valine and CF Matt Andersen to pick up the slack with the departure of All-City first-teamer Jordan Karnofsky and second-teamer Jason Harris.

Cordova (6-2) – Hall of Fame coach Guy Anderson has reliable players in all-leaguers P Tommy Mahon and LF Mike Willeford, 3B Marlon Bowman, DH Matt Clemons, 1B Alan Hyde, C Chris Joyce and 2B Logan Ahlstrom will aid the offense.

Elk Grove (4-2) – The Thundering Herd (26-8 last year) is the defending champion in the Delta League and Division I. The Herd returns second-team All-City and all-league 3B Camryn Spears (.423, 25 RBIs) and a solid supporting cast of SS-P Cody Allen (.309), CF Alex Ross (.398) and RF Andy Lopez (.306).

Jesuit (3-3) – Coach Joe Potulny says his club is young, returning only veteran seniors in all-league CF Mike Metzger and RF Matt Evans among the regulars. Juniors SS/2B Brian Devlin and 1B/3B Derek Sandoval have experience. However, the Marauders go with three sophomores in P/1B Andy Oros, 1B/P Lars Anderson and C Kellen Hoime.

Laguna Creek (4-2) – Left-hander Ben Cargile, who was 6-2 for the Cardinals (23-6) last season, opened 2004 with a no-hitter against Davis. No batted balls reached the outfield.

Combining the talent of Cargile with the powerful bat of all-league junior RF Ryan Hanlon (.444) and veterans CF Sean Mooney and LF Matt Porter, the Cardinals should be tough again.

West Campus (4-1) – All-league P Austin Facino and C John Mitchell give coach Darren Brown a strong battery. The Warriors were 9-2 in nonleague games last year, 7-9 in the Pioneer Valley League. INF Matt Nino, P Ricky Sample and RF Mason Asher are playing well.

Woodcreek (6-0-1) – Just follow the scouts and they'll lead you to Player of the Year candidate P/1B Eric Berger. Last season, the All-City left-hander was 7-2 with a 0.52 ERA and led the area in strikeouts with 123 in 59 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings. He also hit .394 with seven homers and 23 RBIs.

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The Bee's Mark McDermott can be reached at (916) 326-5525 or mmcdermott@sacbee.com.