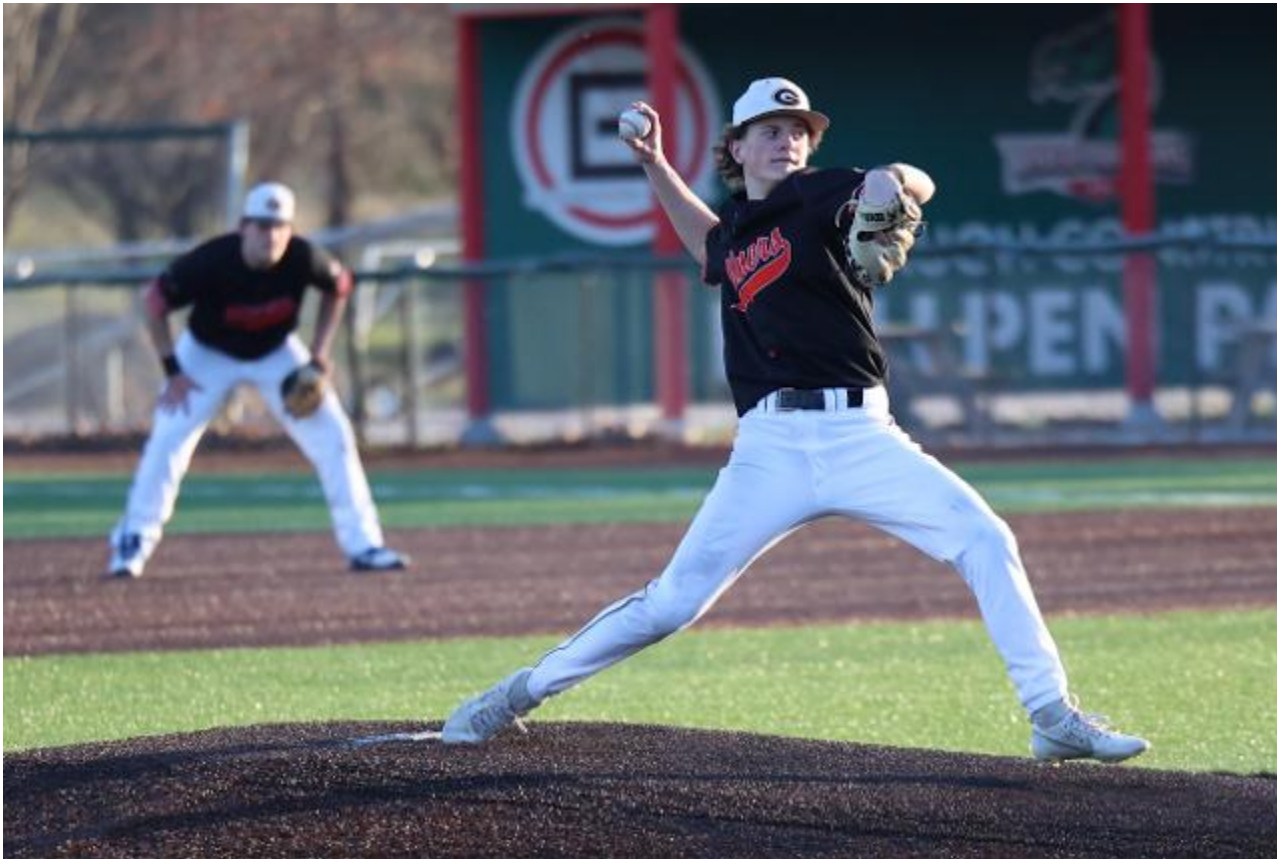


# Gillespie Baseball Reloads For 2024 Season - Miners Seek Another Deep Playoff Run

by Bradley Piros, Reporter  
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**GILLESPIE** - By no means does Gillespie baseball head coach Jeremy Smith think his team's window is closed.

"No, not at all," he said Monday afternoon after a [9-0 win over Marquette Catholic](#) in the season opener.

"We think we can compete for the conference and compete for a regional. We're going to give everybody our best shot and see what happens."

After last season's 32-2 campaign, anything less than a regional would prove to be a bit of a disappointment, even if the team graduated six seniors, five of whom were key starters throughout the season.

In 2024 the Miners will be without last year's strongest bat, Kamryn Link, who batted a .528 average and had a team-high 41 RBIs on 56 hits. They also lost another big hitter in Chase Helvey who had a batting average of .344.

Link was also a go-to pitcher. Through 61 innings pitched, he struck out 85 batters and had a 1.03 ERA. Colton Bultema and Bryan Jubelt will also be missing from this year's pitching rotation. They combined for 100 strikeouts and had ERAs of 1.22 and 1.29 respectively.

The team also lost Jaiden Johnson and starting catcher Ian Brown.

"Losing them of course always hurts, especially after the season we had, but we feel like we have some guys that we can slide in to eat up some innings and give us quality at-bats. We'll see what happens," Smith said.

Last season was the most successful in program history, having been the first time the Miners ever put up a 30-plus win season. They beat Piasa Southwestern 4-3 in the regional final before being knocked out by Quincy Notre Dame in the Pleasant Plains Sectional final by a score of 5-0.

QND eventually went on to take third in the IHSA Class 2A state tournament.

In 2022 Gillespie finished the season 21-5 and won a regional title against New Berlin 2-1. In coach Smith's 13 years as head coach, the Miners have had eight winning seasons and brought home five regional titles.

Last year's regional was the program's third in four seasons. Since 2019, the Miners have a record of 83-28.

"I don't think they're overconfident," Smith said. "I think they realize we lost quite a bit. I think they realize that we're going to get everybody's best shot, whether we want it or not. We're going to get everybody's best game."

And that's okay because the Miners still have a lot that returned for the 2024 season.

Gillespie has just as big of a senior class this season with the likes of Jesse Berry, Bryce Buhs, Daniel Wolber, Tristen Wargo, Bryce Hohnsbehn, and Jaydon Baker all coming back.

Buhs was Monday's star of the game thanks to a seventh-inning grand slam. He finished the game 2 for 3 with four RBIs. Berry also sent a solo shot over the fence in the seventh.

Sophomore Luke Schuckenbrock returns as the starting second baseman and he had a pretty good day with a two-RBI single and then five strikeouts on the mound in relief. Wolber started the game on the bump and also struck out five.

"We've got a lot of guys coming back, Smith said.

A lot of guys coming back that will hopefully try and defend their South Central Conference title after a perfect 9-0 SCC campaign.

Repeating as conference champions and hoisting another regional plaque are the team's two main goals according to Smith, but he and the Miners want a little bit more.

"We want to get out of that sectional and just see what happens."