

Seneca Valley baseball team set for first WPIAL season

By Gary Tuma

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Seneca Valley's first baseball game is Saturday. It's first baseball game ever.

After years of clamoring by residents of the school district, the Raiders will field a baseball team this season for the first time in the high school's existence.

"It's been a very interesting, enthusiastic experience. Interesting on our part to see what its going to be like, and enthusiastic from people in the communities who have been trying to get a baseball program started for, oh, 20 years or so," said Dave Florie, the new baseball coach.

Florie anticipated considerable enthusiasm from the students, too, and he wasn't disappointed. Seventy-five boys tried out for the team.

"I figured it would be at least that many. They've been begging for

Allen's job difficult, though. After the first week of practice, (which began March 4) they pared the squad from 75 players down to 31, and by this week had cut the squad to the 25 they plan to keep.

Considering themselves lucky that the weather was good enough that first week that they could get outside for a few days, they used a rating system to evaluate the players on five different criteria. But the squad cutdown was still an immense undertaking.

"He probably didn't have a real good opportunity to see everybody, and he had another problem: he couldn't go on last year's performances to have an idea of what anybody could do," said Seneca Athletic Director Ken Lockey.

But Florie and Allen finally arrived at a squad of five or six seniors (one boy who was sick is being given an opportunity to try out this week), eight juniors, 11

is tough; Riverside has everybody back; New Castle and Slippery Rock both have talent, and Ellwood City has had a great baseball tradition for a long time," Florie said. "We're going to try to win some ballgames, but by the same token, with that sophomore group, we're trying to build to the program."

Florie said he has fooled around on paper with a starting lineup, but thought it was too early to start mentioning any names.

Florie, who has been the guidance counselor at Seneca Valley since 1981, was born in the Beaver Valley and played baseball for Ellwood City. He also played college baseball at Geneva. He had coached and managed teams in Beaver County for 10-12 year before moving to Zelenople in 1970, and is now involved in the youth minor league baseball program there.

A new ballfield is being built on school grounds, but it won't be ready