

## baseball team practices hard to reach their potential

Step up to the plate and get into a perfect stance. With a ball coming at you at more than 50 miles an hour react instantly to hit it out of the park. After hitting the ball, sprint to first base before the outfielders threw you out. And that's just half the game.

Freshman catcher Matthew Arnold believed that the hardest position in baseball to play was the pitcher. He said that there was more pressure on the pitcher to perform accurately. Sophomore Adam North disagreed.

"I'd have to say it's being the catcher, because I'm a catcher, but you're running the game. It's just like hitting; you have less than a second to react. You're also in on every single play and there is no time off," North said.

Whatever position you played, baseball was a hard sport. It's a difficult sport that took skill to play. And the coaching staff had to be able to decide who had the skill to be able to play and who didn't. The teams had to be cut to no more than 50 players.

"It really just comes down to trying to find the top [however many] kids we can get and then how the pieces work together. And the skill level is obviously a big chunk of it," Coach Mitch Wiles said.

One senior, who was good enough to make the team all four years, was also good enough to get signed to play in college. Austin

Giannola achieved his goal and signed to play for Labette Community College.

"They start recruiting you, going to your games, invite you to the campus. Then they start talking money with you and offer scholarships, and when I got my first one it was unreal, a dream come true," Giannola said.

During tryouts the freshmen through seniors worked together. In his last year playing high school ball, Giannola tried to push the freshmen to do their best. For him it had all just gone by too fast, but he was excited for the future.

On March 25 the varsity team had its first game against Shawnee Mission East where the Raiders were defeated 13-2. That just gave them more drive to try to win their second game against Blue Valley Northwest. But that drive just wasn't enough. The Raiders fell 9-1.

"I felt pretty good about the stuff I did for that game [SM East]. I just kind of poorly executed a lot of the pitches especially in the first inning where I gave up a few runs," junior Tyler Perdue said. "It kind of went downhill after that but overall it wasn't a horrible game. First games of the year are kind of like that. You just got to work through it."

The team improved against Blue Valley Northwest.

"I think the team played better overall, from our first game against East. I was the starting pitcher in the game against BVNW and I didn't really do my job," senior Calvin Freeman said. "The defense played great and as the starting pitcher I didn't give our team a chance to win. Since I'm the pitcher all I can do is worry about my pitching and the guys hitting.

I've been working with the pitching coach on some of the stuff I thought I did wrong, controlling pitches and preventing runners from stealing. With that, I think we will do better our next game [April 3 against Olathe Northwest]."

Purdue agreed with Freeman about the BVNW game.

"Our last game [BVNW] was a better outing, but we had one bad inning that kind of killed us. We didn't score as many runs as we would've liked to, but defense was solid and hitting was better than it has been. I just have to clean up some things pitching wise, but it's all right we are moving along," Perdue said.

**by Jacob York**