



## Lady Longhorns will see eight more varsity games this season

*By Jan Schultz*

*The Imperial Republican*

With Chase County Fair just taking off, it's hard to believe the Lady Longhorn softball team will be in competition a week from now.

But, next Tuesday, Aug. 21, the day before Chase County Schools even starts classes, the softball team will be on its way for a pair of games at Southern Valley.

Coach Denise Smith, now in her fifth year as head coach at CCS, said it's a bit of a whirlwind to get ready for the first contests.

The start of organized practices couldn't begin until Aug. 6, leaving just 11 days before the first outing.

And here in Imperial, this week is filled with the Chase County Fair, which cuts into many players' practice schedules, she noted.

That's why coaches scheduled two-a-days last week, hoping to get in as much practice as possible.

"We just try to fit in as much before fair and cover as much as possible," she said.

With that in mind, she said several days last week focused on a particular skill, such as throwing.

She is also dealing with six players who are new to the Lady Longhorn softball program, so a lot of time has to be spent on the basic fundamentals of the sport.

Chase County will have 14 players who will be able to compete this season, although one of them will likely be out the first four to five weeks.

Blair Hartman, a junior, broke her finger last week and is hoping to be back late in the season.

One other player, senior Jordan Gibb, isn't even counted in the 14 "playable" team members, Smith noted, because she continues to suffer from a nerve problem in her arm, for which she had surgery last year. On top of that, she broke a foot recently at work so will not see any action this year.

However, Smith said Gibb wants to play some kind of role with the team this year.

Here is the roster of players for the 2012 season.

Seniors—Jordan Gibb, Emily Johnston, Michaela Space.

Juniors—Anna Bauerle, Cassie Burpo, Blair Hartman, Jodi Koellner, Abbi Vetter, Ally Vrbas.

Sophomores—Jessica Hartman, Claire Kuenne, Emma Mollendor, Faith Reinke.

Freshmen—Shelby Bigham, Jasmine Laird.

Jason Speck returns as the team's assistant coach again this season.

### **Eight varsity games added**

The team will play 23 varsity softball games this season, eight more than last year, and they

are hoping to improve on a record that saw no wins in 2011.

Fans may look twice when they see Perry, Okla., on the Lady Longhorn 2012 schedule Aug. 31 for a home game at Schroeder field.

Smith said that is Imperial native Bryan Hayes' high school softball team that is coming here to play CCS the last day of the month and will also travel to Wray, Colo., for contests. He is the son of Randy and Margene Hayes.

Also added was a return to the Grand Island Northwest tournament for three games Sept. 15, a double-header here against Cozad Sept. 18 and two games in Ogallala Sept. 20 vs. McCook and Gothenburg.

In addition, the team will have seven to eight JV games.

Next week's opener at Southern Valley is a varsity triangular against teams from Southern Valley and Blue Hill. First pitch will be at 3 p.m. MT

Two days later on Aug. 23, the team will travel to Southern Valley again for games against the host and Grand Island Central Catholic, also with a 3 p.m. MT start time.

Chase County home opener will be Thursday, Aug. 30, against the Perry, Okla., teams for varsity and JV games.