

# 2021 SEASON WEEKLY RECAPS

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## WEEK #12 RECAP

### **“BLACKJACK”**

There may not be enough words in the English language to keep finding new ways to describe this team.

But here's one more to add before we run out: Undefeated.

The 88s have accomplished a goal rarely seen before by completing a perfect 21-0 season thanks to a 16-3 win in their final game to take the franchise's first ever championship.

Setting the tone once again in the leadoff spot was Travis going 5/5 with 3 runs scored.

Following his lead were Nikki and Marnie with 3 hits apiece, Josh with 4 hits and 5 RBI and more defensive brilliance, including another Schumer / Marnie double play.

It wasn't all smooth sailing. The game started off with a scare when a baffling missed call at 3B followed by an uncharacteristic missed play in the OF had the 88s down 1-0 early. But then, in the bottom half of the inning, it happened...

The 88s had the bases loaded. While Schumer (on 3B) and Myles (coaching 3B) were hoping for a 2 run flare into right field, Jeff had other ideas. He stepped up to the plate and cracked the first pitch he saw deep to left center field.

With all base runners ready to tag up, they watched the center fielder turn and run towards the warning track.

As the ball landed over the fence feelings of disbelief quickly gave way to an overwhelming sense that something special just happened.

There have only been a handful of truly legendary home runs hit in Canada. First there was the “touch em all Joe” walk off winner in the 1993 World Series. Followed up 22 years later by the Bautista bat flip in the 2015 playoffs. Both were done by home run hitters and neither were done with the bases loaded.

Where does Jeff's grand slam rank? Only time will tell. Some say it was the best all time while others argue it was a close 3rd. Either way, the King of Coventry has added a new C2 jewel to his crown with one of the most exciting hits in 88s history.

After that the game was never really in doubt again as the 88s rolled on for a convincing win. By the time pictures were taken and twisted teas drank, the 88s were sitting comfortably on top of the mountain, as champions.

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## WEEK #11 RECAP

### “VEINTE”

Even on a night when some cylinders weren't firing against their toughest opponent yet, the 88s still found a way to win by a touchdown and extend their winning streak to a beastly 20-0.

After a couple scoreless innings to start the game and a big 5 run 3rd the 88s followed a recent trend of starting slow offensively before getting hot.

Another habit of the 88s is how they use their incredible depth where so many different players can step up to lead the way on any given night. Tonight it was Myles' turn to come up big with a couple doubles and his first home run out of the park which was complimented well with his best outing at short stop.

“I got together with Bake last week for a BP sesh and he fixed me. I feel like Shake again.” Myles said following the game.

More hotness came off Brian's bat as he continued his epic season at the plate with 4 more hits, 3 of them for extra bases. Schumer, Travis and Josh each added 3 hits of their own, several of the impressive variety.

Even with a balanced effort on offense with every player getting at least 1 hit, what really floats the 88s boat is their defense.

Facing a lineup with a lot of power, it was especially important for the outfield to be up to the task, and that they were. From left to right, Brian, Joce, Travis and Jeff each made 2 or more key outs at important times to keep the 88s on top and the opponent flustered.

The anchor tonight was Marnie at 1B who had a pivotal run saving highlight reel stop, which if not made could have opened up a big Under Construction inning. She also made the guys on the left side of the infield look good a few times by turning some wonky throws into outs.

Speaking of wonky, Sandi used her smarts to keep the opponent hitters off balance most of the night with purposely crappy pitches when they were down 2 strikes. The wise strategy paid off with a couple K's and other weak hits that the defense gobbled up behind her.

When it was all said and done, the 88s came away with a 14-7 victory which puts them into the finals, 1 win away from destiny.

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## **WEEK #10 RECAP**

### **“PLAYOFFS”**

There was a different feeling in the air. Maybe it was the late summer rain, or maybe it was the sense that despite a historic regular season, the real job had just begun.

Playoffs were finally here, 3 wins until immortality.

The 88s first match up was against a familiar foe in Balls Deep. After dispatching them 16-1 in their last meeting, it was more of the same as the 88s cruised late to a 22-5 mercy victory.

As if hindered by the mucky field, the 88s offence got off to a slow start. Yet thanks to a bomb double deep to CF by Schumer in the first to score Travis and aggressive base running by Myles to score from 2B on a pop-out to the catcher in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the 88s were able to keep the game tied 2-2 long enough to find their footing.

Any find it they did.

Travis played the lead off role to perfection, finishing with a perfect 5/5 and scoring every time. Joce launched a 2 run bomb double of her own in the 4<sup>th</sup> as part of the big 7 run inning. Marnie had 2 impressive knocks which she came around to score on. Brian, Jeff and Myles (including a little league error aided “homerun”) each had 4 hits apiece and despite a bit of an off night for Sandi she still managed to contribute a pivotal play; a bases loaded 2 out walk which opened the door for Andrews 2 run single to cap off the inning.

Balls Deep came out strong and gave the 88s their best shot. After weathering the early storm the 88s dried off and clamped down to set themselves up for a second round matchup vs Under Construction.

### **EXTRA BITS:**

The 88s winning streak has now reached legal drinking age at 19 in a row.

Their 3 walks were tied for most in a single game this season.

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## WEEK #9 RECAP

### “AGE OF MAJORITY”

They've been watching it mature, quietly noticing how it was developing and aging into a beautiful young thing.

After some tense moments made it feel like they might come up just short, the 88s perseverance was rewarded with a full figured 18-0 perfect regular season to hold in their arms.

Their bats were impressive all year, including tonight, but also like tonight, defense was their calling card.

Game 1 was nearly the franchise's first shut out. Thanks in part to a surprisingly strong start from Myles at short stop the 88s only gave up 10 hits and a single late run. Both franchise records.

While fundamentals played a large part, the 88s brought the flash when needed.

A tricky pop-up in front of home plate was turned into a double play thanks to Nikki's quick thinking and Marnie's unapologetic shove of the runner on first for the second out. *“Move bitch!”* one spectator heard her say, while the runner looked scared and impressed at the same time.

Josh was a vacuum at 3B all night, turning in 5 double plays, some of the amazing variety including a game defining play in game 1 and a touch and toss that was finished off with an excellent short hop scoop by Schumer at 2B. In fact the only thing Josh failed to grasp was the fence as he crashed over it trying to chase down a pop-fly. *“I give you a 5 on the dismount.”* Jeff was heard saying in RF, knowing he would have landed gracefully on his feet due to his cat like agility.

After uncharacteristically failing to score in 3 of the first 6 innings during game 18, the 88s started feeling the pressure after letting the score get to within 3 runs late. *“I was on the phone ownership, giving them names of people to cut for next season.”* Coach said post game.

That's when their bats started to heat up. Schumer's sharp lead off hit was the spark. Josh, Nikki and Jeff's run producing hits fanned the flames and by the time Travis, Joce and Myles came through with RBI doubles, it was a full on 11 run inferno that led to high fives and hugs instead of pink slips.

When the regular season fittingly ended by Sandi recording yet another K on the mound, the 88s found themselves in rare air with what must be one of the few perfect regular seasons Welland has ever seen.

It's a really nice accomplishment but the job is not done. Bring on the playoffs.

#### **EXTRA BITS:**

Josh's first inside the park home run (on 1 good leg)

Chandler's 2nd inside the park home run (he used both his legs)

88s won their 18 regular season games by an average of 14 runs (+260 run differential)

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#### **WEEK #8 RECAP**

##### **"HOW SWEET IT IS"**

The defense dazzled, the bats destroyed, the Jesse debuted and the 88s dominated their way to a sweet 16-0 record.

##### While the offence provided the streamers and glitter:

- Brian 10/10 + 10 RBI, raising his batting average to a re-donk-ulous .939
- Nikki 8/11 + 4 runs
- Travis 10/11 including his second inside the park home run
- Schumer 7/11 + 5 RBI
- Jeff with 8 hits + 8 RBI (is this called an 88 night?)
- Andrew with a near record tying 7 RBI in a single game (9 overall)

##### It was the defense that blew out the candles:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> ever triple play in franchise history (Andrew tags runner going to 3B, throws over to 2B for the 2<sup>nd</sup> out, Schumer catches, turns and guns to Marnie at 1B for the 3<sup>rd</sup> out)
- Sandi pitched 9 of 14 innings scoreless

- Brian strong and accurate throws from 3B all night
- Season best (and likely franchise best) 7 runs given up over 2 games in a double header
- Andrew with a very rangy dig and flip across the diamond to nab runner at 1B

The 88s now stand as the last remaining undefeated team. If they're going to sweep the regular season, they'll need to win their last two games against quality opponents.

#### EXTRA BITS:

Jesse didn't waste time impressing in her return to action with a stand up double on the first pitch she saw (5 hits, 7 runs overall). She also didn't waste any time in joining the K club with a first night invite.

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#### **WEEK #7 RECAP**

No games. 1 got moved, the other forfeited to us.

*"Ya I'd be scared to play us too."* – Josh Koehn

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#### **WEEK #6 RECAP**

##### **"SHORT ON PLAYERS, LONG ON WINS"**

There was a threat to the 88s win streak this week, a schedule change.

Forced to play at 6:15, half the team was not able to attend but thanks to saviors Kristen, Andrew, Kerry and Dani (plus a gracious approval by the Baby Batters) the 88s managed to fill a roster and avoid the forfeit.

It was a big enough contribution for the fill in players to be present but they were also nice enough to bring along some gravy. Most notable was Kristen going 3/4 with a walk + run and Andrew with some vintage niftiness at SS + a bomb triple to LF. For the core 88s, it was Brian continuing his red hot season by going 5/5 + 3 runs + 2 RBI.

Generally though, it was a struggle for the 88s on offence.

Since runs weren't coming like they normally do, Sandi stepped up to lead the 88s by striking out 4 (including their best hitter for a key first out in the final inning) and putting out another 3 at first.

The 88s scored a season low 11 runs but did enough to scrape out a win and extend their win streak to 11.

Next up was a double header two days later...

Game 1 was a classic 88s all you can eat buffet and some players came to feast.

Jeff (6/6 + 2 runs + 3 RBI), Josh (6/6 + 5 runs sort of + 3 RBI) and Myles (5/5 + 2 runs + 3 RBI) all went perfect at the plate to empty the chicken chow mein chafing dishes.

Joce (5/6 + 4 runs + 4 RBI including 2 monster triples) and Kylie R. (4/6 + 3 runs + RBI including a stellar pitching debut) teamed up to destroy the sushi section.

The players who came away with the award for the most glutinous slob of the night were Nikki with her 4/5 + 2 runs + an all-time high 6 RBI, breaking a record that had stood since 2018 and Brian with his 5/6 + 5 runs + 5 RBI including his first inside the park homerun and his second cycle of the season.

The 88s ran away with it 29-8 before the white napkin was waved.

Game 2 saw the 88s get served some tough steak but thanks to persistent chewing and strategic use of BBQ sauce they were able to clean their plates.

Things started well with a nice soup and salad appetizer as Jeff sat down 7 straight to begin his pitching debut while the 88s got off to an early 7-0 lead.

Yet when the grumpy ass waiter brought over a steaming pile of sh\*tty calls and Jeff's hot start turned sour, the 88s had to dig deep to keep their magical run alive.

Schumer's 3/5 + 2 runs including strong outfield play along with a generous heaping of Brian's (4/4 + 2 runs + 4 RBI) and Josh's (4/4 + run + RBI) perfect games was the ideal palate cleanser.

All they needed was a sweet dessert to round off the meal which Travis was more than happy to deliver; a stuffed 3/3 + BB + his first inside the park homerun + 2 runs + 3 RBI stat line.

As the 88s loosened their belts and belched out some high fives, they found themselves with a baker's dozen 13-0 record and more distance between themselves and the second place team in the division who fell to 8-3.

#### EXTRA BITS:

Nikki takes over the crown as reigning iron lady since she's now the only remaining player not to have missed a game.

Kylie R. and Jeff both get their first W while Josh gets his first save by giving up only a single run over the final 3 innings of game 2.

Andrew makes a dazzling scoop, spin and throw to Marnie at 1B for the defensive highlight of the night. He was also involved in an important double play late in game 2 started by Josh on the mound after a come backer.

Injured star John crutched out to show his support during the game 1 feast which may have helped spur the 88s on.

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## WEEK #5 RECAP

### “A PERFECT 10”

The 88s passed the test.

Playing their first full night without starting short stop John, the 88s didn't waste time before showing how impactful that missing piece might be during a historically bad first inning.

Dealing with a rare deficit in game 1 after letting in 11 early runs, the 88s settled down and found their usual form by stifling their opponent for only 2 runs allowed over the final 5 innings.

Their depth was tested, but the 88s used a balance attack to score high marks and reel off 2 more wins for a perfect 10-0 start to the season, a new franchise record.

Game 1 showed their vulnerability but it also showed their resolve.

Nikki (a.k.a. The Bookie Speed Demon), Travis and Joce each went 4/5 with 3 runs and at least 1 RBI. Brian went 5/5 including the team's first home run out of the park with a 3 run knock in the first. Myles went 4/4 with 3 triples and a joyous inside the park homerun for what may have been his first career opposite field hit. Josh knocked in a personal best 6 RBI.

While game 1 had its stand out performances, game 2 is when the 88s really showed their strength by having every player both score at least 1 run and knock in at least 1 run.

Highlight of the night defensively goes to Kylie D's leaping grab at the apex of 2B to pluck a liner out of the air and save a hit.

### EXTRA BITS:

It's surprising that it took until game 9 for an 88 to put it out of the park but it's not surprising the first one to do it was Brian.



He then showed off more of his 5 tools by teaming up with Nikki to nab a runner at the plate in the bottom of the first to help stop the bleeding. Although he only managed to bat 8/9 overall. He now sits at a disappointing .927 for the season. Tisk tisk.

Myles' first perfect night at plate (9/9, 8 runs, 8 RBI) and an adequate job filling in at SS.

Sandi's birthday! 35 is going to be a great year for her.

Nikki showed off her speed (6/8, 6 runs, 3 RBI).

Joce upped her BA by going 7/10, 5 runs, 4 RBI

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## WEEK #4 RECAP

### **"2 WINS, 2 LOSSES."**

The 88s unleashed more of their arsenal this week.

Whether it was Travis using a sniper rifle to fire off a record 8 hits in a game or the team sharing a flamethrower to torch an opponent for a record 49 hits and .790 batting average, the 88s were on the offensive all night.

After the assault on the record book was complete and the dust settled, the 88s found themselves holding a franchise best tying win streak to give themselves the top record in the league and a perfect 8-0 July.

On a night of many monster stat lines making it difficult to stand out, it was Brian doing the most damage by duel wielding shotguns to go 14/14 (already the second best at bat hit streak on record, and counting) with 10 runs and 10 RBI over 2 games. He's now hitting a cheat mode like 30/32 on the season (.938).

Not wanting to be overshadowed, Marnie used her colt python to more than double her season hit and run totals by going 9/11 with 8 runs and 4 RBI over 2 games. She also misfired and shot herself in the foot to pad her strikeout lead. She's the current president of the K club.

On the defensive side of the ball it was Travis' double play nearly turning into the franchise's second ever triple play that gave them something to cheer about even while their guns were holstered.

It wasn't all polished steel for the 88s however. Starting short stop and early MVP candidate John went down with what turned out to be a broken foot in the first inning of game 1 while sliding into second base. He's out 6-8 weeks.

In game 2 it was hall of famer Sandi departing with a jammed hand after getting in front of a hard hit ball on the mound. She's listed as day to day.

The depth of the 88s will be tested in the second half of the season as they look to continue their pursuit of the ultimate prize.

#### EXTRA BITS:

75% of the 88s games have ended in a mercy victory (6 of 8).

Brian ties own runs in a game record with 6.

Marnie, Nikki (game 1) and Kylie D. (game 2) all tie hits record with 5.

Nikki also ties runs record with 5.

Team ties most total runs in a game with 34.

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#### **WEEK #3 RECAP**

##### **"BIG DOGS GOTTA EAT."**

If there were any doubts who the biggest dog in the division is, the 88s chewed them up with back to back dominating performances.

While the yips of 2 enthusiastic young pups cheered them on, the 88s finished the night as wieners of 6 straight to start the season and now sit firmly on top of the leagues pound.

Being short a couple studs didn't slow them down any since the strength of this pack is in the quality of their bitches.

Led by rookie bitch Kylie R (7/9 + 3 runs + 5 RBI) and super bitch Joce (recording all 3 outs during her first inning at SS, not to mention now leading the team in hits), the 88s built on their growing reputation as the team to beat come September.

Not to be totally overshadowed, the males pulled their weight tonight as well.

Ryan escaped his early season cage with a hot start by going 7/8 + 6 runs + 5 RBI including a bomb double in his first at bat and being involved in a couple double plays at 3B.

Myles stopped playing like shih tzu and acted more like his 2019 Doberman form by barking out 8 runs and 8 RBI including the team's first round tripper with a grand salami in the 6th to seal the mercy win and complete his cycle.

The 2 brightest spots of the night on defense both involved home plate.

In game 1, it was an epic relay to cut down a home run attempt.

Started by Schumer at the outfield fence, highlighted by John's missile from left field to Kylie R. at home plate, it was one of the most impressive outfield assists you'll ever see. Made all the more bad ass by John's "no biggie" attitude while his team cheered around him.

In game 2, it was a super fun rundown to end the game.

With the taste of blood on their lips the 88s swarmed to corral the opponent's captain between 3B and home. Started again by Schumer, this time from 1B, it was Myles at C and Marnie at 3B who set the initial trap. After what initially appeared to be a thrown away ball, it was heads up covering by John at 3B and then Jeff at home, that allowed the 88s to complete the final out of the game before howling at the near full moon above them.

As the 88s got their well-deserved post game tummy scratches, they started looking forward to their next meal.

#### EXTRA BITS:

Have played and beat all teams in the division.

4<sup>th</sup> mercy win in 6 games.

1 of only 2 undefeated teams (Sons of Pitches, last years champions).

Myles becomes the first 88 with 200 career RBIs with his game 1 home run.

Record runs in one inning (15 in 1<sup>st</sup> inning vs. Flaming Moes).

Record team BA for a game (.741 vs Flaming Moes) thanks to 4 players going perfect at the plate (Joce, Jeff, John, Travis).

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#### **WEEK #2 RECAP**

**"4 AND OH MY!"**

The night almost didn't happen. The skies opened up pre game putting the double header in jeopardy. Yet after the clouds took a hike all that was left for the 88s to do was send 2 new opponents packing.

After a forgettable game 1 that the 88s took 11-2 thanks to great all around defense and several stand out batting performances, including Josh's 4/4 + 2 runs + 2 RBI, Joce's 4/4 + run and Kylie D's 3/4 + run + 2 RBI, the 88s headed into game 2 prepared for their toughest test of the young season.

After getting ahead with an early 5-2 lead thanks in part to a bases clearing triple by Travis in the 2nd, the 88s bats went quiet while error induced boo's from the home crowd got loud. They quickly found themselves face to face with the real possibility of dropping their first game of the season after digging themselves a 14-6 hole after 5 innings.

Despite a good chunk of the squad dealing with pain from a grueling weekend tournament, the 88s refused to wave the white flag and still had one more big push left in them.

Sparked by a lead off hit by Kylie R. and the next 5 straight batters following her lead, including Brian's bases loaded 2 run double, the 88s put together an epic 8 run 6th to climb all the way out and knot the game up at 14.

After Balls Deep left the door ajar with a 3 up 3 down top of the 7th, the 88s promptly kicked it open with timely hits by Schumer, Nikki and Marnie.

Stepping to the plate with the bases loaded, still tied at 14 was Pope, who blessed the 88s with a clutch 2 run single. Those ended being the winning runs after Balls Deep went quietly again in the final inning by sending 3 harmless hits into the waiting gloves of Travis, Sandi and Joce.

So after Balls Deep tried to steal the 88s home field advantage before the game and then one of their runs off the board before the final inning, it was the 88s who proved to be the better thieves by stealing the game and extending their win streak to 4 straight.

#### EXTRA BITS:

- The 88s are now 1 of only 3 remaining teams without an L after handing Balls Deep their first.
- John goes with an interesting "should I get it?" while tracking a ball deep at SS.
- Kylie R. joins the super fun K club.
- 88s remain homerless after 4 games after Travis narrowly gets called out at home plate trying to extend a 2 run triple into a round tripper.

- After the shaky middle innings of game 2, the 88s defense found their footing and ended the game 9 up 9 down over the final 3 innings.
  - 88s almost lost a player after Kylie R. narrowly escaped severe head trauma by ducking out of the way of a Myles liner while standing on 1B.
  - Next up for the 88s are 2 new opponents in the Benchwarmers and Flaming Moes.
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## WEEK #1 RECAP

### “MESSAGE SENT”

The revamped 88s came together on night one of the season to send a message. After two lopsided mercy wins, the content of their letter was clear.

Authoring the opening paragraph was #13 Josh Koehn. Now in his second stint with the 88s after a couple life and leg saving surgeries, he honored each of his ailments by catching and tossing two separate double plays at 3B over to #27 Marnie Lambert at 1B and starting his night at the plate with 2 straight hits and 2 trips around the bases.

At times, all players took over the quill to contribute their own strongly worded sentences.

On the mound #8 Sandi Griffi sat down 6 opponents while giving 0 free passes across 2 games. #22 Kylie Douglas was worth the wait during her spring training hold out by putting up an all-time stat line of 5/5 with 5 runs and 5 RBIs in game 2, which all ties franchise records. #97 John Paul Harvey set the tone in game 1 with back to back strong plays at SS. #9 Kylie Rendell put up 7 hits and 4 runs across 2 games. #5-0 Travis Belchior played all over the diamond on defense while still putting up 6 RBIs. Team vet #18 Brian Chandler scored every time he got on base (9/10 with 9 runs) and #10 Jeff Henderson (8/10 with team leading 8 RBI) showed he could also reign outside of Coventry. Nikki and Myles were also in attendance.

Not wanting the story to be too one note, after he sent a rocket to the fence with his previous at bat, Travis decided to add some levity with a high spin dribbler infield hit that came to rest 6 inches in front of home plate.

Also wanting to show they have a vulnerable side, the 88s took an inning off as a team to boot around some errors. Brian also decided to flesh out his career stats by recording his first ever strikeout to join the K club. After they had their fun seeing how the other side lives for a while, they got back to work and finished the game on a 27-2 run.

The bold exclamation point of the night came halfway through game 2 when #6 Joce Hunter sent an absolute bomb to the left field fence for an incredible stand up 2 run triple. That blast

rounded off her all around excellent night on both sides of the ball, playing lock down defense in CF to go along with 6 hits and 6 RBI over 2 games.

By the time their letter reached the league office the following morning the news had already begun to spread throughout the division. The 88s are back. The 88s are stronger, faster and a force to be reckoned with.

#### NEW RECORDS:

Most runs in a game (34)  
Most runs in an inning (14)  
Largest margin of victory (+25)  
Most runs in a game (5, Schumer and Brian)  
Most RBI in a game (5, Schumer)  
Most hits in a game (5, Schumer)

While today it was these records that went down, in the end, they all shall fall.

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#### **2021 SEASON PREVIEW**

After a lost year to a global pandemic, the 88s are coming into the 2021 season looking to catch the winning bug with a retooled roster.

A fresh batch of talented rookies join a group of returning 88 legends to form what feels like a whole new club.

Odds makers have the 88s at 10-1 to win it all, which is the most aggressive prediction placed on the franchise heading into a new season.

They seem to be embracing the pressure. We caught up with an optimistic 88s coach after their latest spring practice.

“Vegas isn’t the only one with high expectations for this year’s team. We have a ton of good players up and down the lineup. We plan to make some noise.”

With a delayed start to the season while waiting on the green light from the government to return to play, the 88s have taken the opportunity to knock off the rust built up during a year on the shelf.

“We’ve been getting in our swings since May. We’ve lost more balls this year than ever which has to be a good sign.”

Leading the way in the lost ball category was OF Brian Chandler, who trimmed up and added strength in the off season to solidify himself as one of the team's premier power hitters.

Time will tell if the 88s can translate an impressive spring and what they have on paper into a winning campaign over a long summer, but there's no hiding the fact they speak of ambitious goals.

This time of year, hope springs eternal.

*The 88s open up their season during the week of July 5th. Tickets remain free but it's recommended to show up at the park early since seating is expected to be limited for social distancing.*