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# Wellsville's Matt Burke named New York State Softball Coach of the Year; Four Lions earn all-state honors

By **JOHN ANDERSON**

The team that wins a state title usually earns the coach of the year honors for New York state.

However, getting to the state final four was more than wins for Wellsville.

As a result, Matt Burke was named New York State Class B Coach of the Year for 2023.

## **LIONS EARN ALL-STATE**

The team had incredible honors as well.

Junior pitcher Makenzie Cowburn earned first-team honors, junior catcher Brazen Beckwith was on the second team all-state, senior shortstop Emma Dunaway was on the third team and sophomore outfielder-infielder-pitcher Makenna Dunbar was named to the fourth team all-state.

"It's a tremendous honor and very humbling," Burke said of the honor. "I give all the credit to our players and our assistant coaches who work tirelessly year-round to make Wellsville softball as good as it can be."

## **THE GROUNDWORK**

Tireless work describes not only the 2023 Wellsville softball team and program, but the work that has been done to lay the foundation of victories and success.

Burke, in his eighth year is 144-30 and the Lions finished 22-2 this year. they were ranked as high as #2 during the season and ended #4 after a one-run loss in the state semifinals, the first time for the Wellsville program in 23 years.

Burke said he wanted to recognize the varsity assistant coaches, Jason Sibble and Rod Perry, the JV head coach Gia George and assistants Heather Vogel and Lindsey Allen and the Modified Co-coaches Kayla Day and Macey Youngberg.

"I'm thankful for the support of the administration each season, and to Erica Aftuck for her time and effort as athletic director," Burke said. "I'd like to acknowledge all the time and effort that Jason Sibble has put into this program. His impact has been paramount to Wellsville Softball's success. He has been with me since I began my time as coach in 2015. Rod Perry and Gia George have also put in tireless work during the off-season as well as the regular season."

## **WHAT A YEAR**

Burke was named 2022 and 2023 Section V B2 Coach of the Year. The state honor this year was shared with shared with Windsor coach Bill Waldron. Burke also earned Big 30 honors honors in 2016, 2019 and 2022.

Another factor into Burke's state coach of the year nod was going 22-2 against a very tough schedule.

Consider:

- Wellsville played four Class AA schools and went 4-0.
- Wellsville played three Class A schools and went 3-0.
- The two losses were to Dubois Catholic Central, 6-3 (a Pennsylvania state finalist in 2022 who finished 18-4 this season) and Marlboro, 3-2 in the state semis.

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- The wins? One of a state champion, four wins over Sectional Champions and eight wins against state-ranked teams.
- Statement wins over defending Class A champion Webster-Schroeder High School; Class AA Eleanor Roosevelt High School of Maryland 5-0 with an enrollment of approximately 2,000 who went to the Maryland State Quarterfinals and finished with a 17-5 record; Gowanda, the Class C State Champion this year; Fredonia High School, the Section 6 B Champions this season; Addison (a 15-4 win) the Section 5 Class C1 Champions this season; St. Mary's Pa. (6-2 win) the #4 in AAAA Pennsylvania at the time and Bath-Haverling in the Class B2 Sectional final, 3-2. Wellsville was down 2-0 and scored three in the bottom of the seventh to win.
- On the way to states, a 15-0 win over Batavia in the crossover game and a 15-5 win over Section 6 B Champion Iroquois in the Far West Regional.

The team also broke single season school records:

- Most home runs (22)
- Most doubles (66)
- Most hits in a season (314)
- The 22 wins in a season is second all-time, which is impressive considering up until a few years ago, teams could play 24 games in a season. Now, you can play 20 in the regular season.

Since Burke took the program over in 2015, Wellsville had 16 All-State players; 16 Big 30 All-Star selections (four player of year) and four AGR selections.

### **CLIMBING THE LADDER**

Wellsville has improved their state ranking each year season-to-season in Class B.

2015 #24

2016 #22

2019 #16

2021 #6

2022 #7

2023 #4

## **THE ALL-STATE PLAYERS**

Class B

### **First Team**

**Makenzie Cowburn**

### **Second Team**

**Brazen Beckwith**

### **Third Team**

**Emma Dunaway**

### **Fourth Team**

**Makenna Dunbar**