

[High school softball preview 2025: Can Turners Falls defend its Division 5 state title?](#)

By Thomas Johnston, Staff Writer

Published: 04-04-2025 3:01 PM

When Gary Mullins took over the Turners Falls softball program in 1979, he was inheriting a team devoid of much success.

While the results weren't there, Mullins saw the potential in what the program could be.

"My first year coaching, this team had never won and never had a winning season," Mullins said. "But, the group of kids that were coming out for softball were winning in volleyball and had just had a pretty good season in basketball. These were decent athletes and I couldn't understand why they weren't winning softball games. We made the tournament in my first season and it's just grown since."

Has it ever.

Mullins and the Thunder returned to the diamond on Monday as the reigning MIAA Div. 5 state champions, as Turners captured the 11th state title in program history last spring.

With a group of talented players returning — led by senior Madi Liimatainen in the circle — Mullins has a squad with its eyes set on repeating.

Along the way, the longtime coach will be going for a milestone of his own. Mullins enters his 46th season in the dugout with an astonishing career record of 782-170. That's just 18 victories away from reaching the 800-win mark — something few high school coaches around the country can say they've done.

"It's just been fun to be part of," Mullins said. "There's been some tough times along the way but also some great rewards. The wins are nice but the relationship you make with the kids is the most fun part. You get through all the highs and lows of coaching them and years later you get a letter from them telling you what they're up to and all that. That's the best part for me.

"I've also been fortunate to have some terrific help along the way with assistant coaches who care," Mullins added. "They aren't just here coaching when their kid is there, they coach because they care about the team."

With Liimatainen — who is closing in on her 1,000th career strikeout in the circle — Turners goes into every game knowing it has a chance. While Mullins has coached some great players throughout his tenure with the Thunder, the Saint Michael's College commit stands out near the top.

"Madi is our show," Mullins said. "There's no question about that. She's certainly our best player and one of the best ever to play at Turners Falls and we have had our share of terrific kids."

It's not just Liimatainen though. Senior Mia Marigliano, one of the leaders of last year's championship squad, is the returning shortstop but may slide over to play catcher.

Marilyn Abarua (OF), Janelle Massey (OF/1B), Madisyn Dietz (3B/C), Addison Talbot (2B), Ivy Lopez (OF), McKenzie Stafford (OF) and Autumn Thorton (P/IF) are all back from last year's title team as well, giving the Thunder good depth in the lineup as well as experience in the field.

"The attitude has been terrific," Mullins said. "We've put the bar pretty high but they seem willing to reach for it. They still have that championship taste in their mouth. They touched it and loved it. If we don't make it to the top, it won't be for a lack of effort. The table is set and if we can get the kids to where we think we can, we have a chance to be competitive."

If Turners isn't the last one standing in the Div. 5 field at the end of the season, there's a good chance it'll be one of the two teams just down the road.

Greenfield won the 2022 and 2023 state championships, and were the favorites to repeat as the No. 1 seed in the field last year. They looked to be on a collision course to meeting Turners in the finals before being upset by Tahanto in the quarterfinals. With senior MacKenzie Paulin — who's committed to Merrimack — in the circle, alongside senior Anna Bucala and returning starters Gloria McDonald, Meghan Collins and Grace Laurie, the Wave will be right back in the mix to reclaim their crown.

Watch out for Franklin Tech as well. The Eagles have their own ace in Hannah Gilbert, while Kylee Gamache and Cordelia Guerin are seniors that have been key cogs with Tech since arriving as freshmen. The Eagles reached the Div. 5 quarterfinals each of the last three seasons.

Athol
COACH: Jerry Duguay

LEAGUE/DIVISION: Franklin County League East/5

LAST YEAR'S RECORD: 7-13

ROSTER: Serena Nkengafe, Ariana Lopez-Hippler, Avalynn Adams, Morgan Brailey, Ella Reed, Gianna Vaillancourt, Kayla Stinehart, Jaylynn Chapalonis, Kahlen Gregory, Madison Hermes, Tapanga Chapalonis, Allison Robertson

OUTLOOK: The Bears took a step forward last year and Duguay — going into this third year coaching the team — will be looking to see his team take another stride in the right direction this spring.

Robertson, a senior, is a returning captain in the outfield while Tapanga Chapalonis is the other senior on the Athol roster and will also serve as a captain.

Vaillancourt, a sophomore, is a player to watch in the middle of the infield while Jaylynn Chapalonis and Hermes will be the pitcher-catcher combo – Chapalonis in the circle and Hermes behind the plate.

Adams is a freshman Duguay says is a player to watch.

Franklin Tech
COACH: Joe Gamache

LEAGUE/DIVISION: Franklin East/5

LAST YEAR'S RECORD: 20-4, D5 quarterfinals

ROSTER: Hannah Gilbert, Kylee Gamache, Cordelia Guerin, Gianna DiSciullo, Shelby O'Leary, Lindsey Taylor, Skylei Lapan, Samantha Duncan, Alison George, Breanna Kempf, Lyla Mickiewicz, Emma Petersen, Sandra Johnson, Brayleigh Burgh, Taylor Underwood, Amelia Rider, Ava Worden, Kendra Steiner, Abigail Dobias, Sofia Melnik, Sarah Beckwith

OUTLOOK: It won't take long for a couple of Eagles to pass career milestones.

Gamache came into the season needing just one hit to reach the 100-hit mark of her career while Gilbert entered the season with 470 strikeouts, 30 away from the 500 milestone.

Those two will be the key catalysts for Tech this spring, the Eagles looking to build on a Franklin County League East title, a Western Mass. Class C championship-game appearance as well as a run to the D5 quarterfinals.

Guerin is another longtime starter for Tech who slots in the outfield while DiSciullo and O'Leary round out the Eagle seniors.

Johnson, a sophomore, is a talented player who can play all over the field. Burgh, another sophomore, is one to watch and a player who can fill in for Gilbert in the circle, while Peterson is another sophomore who can play in multiple spots for Gamache's squad.

"We have a solid group of kids," Joe Gamache said. "We're still sort of in the early stages of figuring things out position-wise and who we are. We had three seniors last year who were three starting infielders and all three batted in top five in the batting order. We have to figure those things out but I can't say we're in a bad place. We have a lot of girls returning from last year's varsity bench who were freshmen that were ready to step in and now are being called to step in and fill some big shoes. We're trying to improve and make a run in the postseason. I'm pretty confident in the talent. It's about coming together as a team and figuring out who we are."

Frontier
COACH: Gary Deane

LEAGUE/DIVISION: Franklin West/4

LAST YEAR'S RECORD: 12-10, D4 Round of 16

ROSTER: Whitney Campbell, Evva Campbell, Adelaide Ehle, Delaney Fifield, Olivia Machon, Bella Orrell, Sophia Pinardi, Abigail Schreiber, Skyler Steele, Ashley Taylor, Raine Wonsey, Adelyn Wood

OUTLOOK: Fifield, Machon, Pinardi and Taylor were all part of the Redhawk squad as freshmen when Frontier made an unexpected run to the Div. 5 semifinals and with that core now seniors, they'll be looking to make a similar run this postseason.

Taylor is six hits away from reaching the 100 hit mark for her career, where she'd join Fifield and Steele. Steele enters her sophomore year already having knocked 103 hits, 30 doubles, 24 home runs and 105 RBIs. Machon batted .403 last year while knocking three home runs.

Wonsey started 14 games in the circle as a seventh grader last year and is someone with a bright future for the Redhawks.

Greenfield
COACH: Ray Dodge

LEAGUE/DIVISION: Franklin West/5

LAST YEAR'S RECORD: 22-2, D5 quarterfinals

ROSTER: Anna Bucala, MacKenzie Paulin, Gloria McDonald, Meghan Collins, Sophia Rotkiewicz, Grace Laurie, Bianca Reynolds, Madison Lemay, Olivia Lemay, Sarah McCloud, Carson Farrell, Kayden Viencek

OUTLOOK: The Green Wave are replacing some stalwarts from their championship teams, including longtime starters Ainslee Flynn, Carly Blanchard, Ellis Benitez and Amber Bergeron.

Paulin, who went over the 500 strikeout mark as a sophomore and last spring surpassed 100 hits, is already off to a big start this season having struck out 19 and giving up just two hits against a tough Tech lineup in the opener.

Bucala joins Paulin as the lone other senior. Bucala has started for Greenfield since her freshman year and is opening the season at shortstop.

McDonald and McCloud will seal spots in the outfield, Rotkiewicz can play in both the infield and outfield, Laurie plays in the infield, Collins returns at first, freshman Olivia Lemay can pitch and play in the infield while freshman Madison Lemay is tasked with playing behind the plate.

Mahar
COACH: Jim Cleveland

LEAGUE/DIVISION: Franklin East/5

LAST YEAR'S RECORD: 4-14

ROSTER: Gabby Matthews, MacKenzie Matthews, Erin Parse, Bella Harrington, Cordelia Rhodes, Julie Mortemor, Makayla Beauchemin, Carly Paluk, Lilah Paluk, Lexi Ares, Jenna Nolette, Bella Burnett, Isabella Kimball, Isla Burnham

OUTLOOK: After not winning a game the previous two seasons, the Senators took a step in the right direction last spring under Cleveland.

Mahar won its final three games to try to build momentum for this spring.

Gabby Matthews is the lone senior for the Sens and will be looked to carry the load in the circle while Ares, an eighth grader, may also pitch. MacKenzie Matthews is a stellar catcher and has improved at the plate.

"I would like us to improve on our win total," Cleveland said. "We lost some very good seniors last year and we are very young but this group has some very good chemistry and hopefully it translates to the field."

Mohawk Trail
COACH: Sherri Lannon

LEAGUE/DIVISION: Franklin East/5

LAST YEAR'S RECORD: 9-12, D5 Round of 32

ROSTER: Adrian Grant, Ashleigh Billiel, Kristen Sevoian, Megan Gabaree, Addie Loomis, Abby Moffatt, Maddie Finn, Aurora Moynihan, Grace Stevens, Emmalee Inman, Sadie Wilcox, Riley Dyer, Bella Brown

OUTLOOK: A six-player senior class powered the Warriors to the postseason last year. Now Mohawk Trail is forced to find a way to replace that production this spring.

Loomis is a returning starter at shortstop, Moffatt is a freshman who will start at third, Stevens is a freshman but will get time in the circle while Wilcox is just a seventh grader but has shown a lot of promise and will also see time in the circle for the Warriors.

Grant, Billiel and Sevoian will play in the outfield, Gabaree starts the season at first, Moynihan will play at second while Finn starts the season behind the plate.

Pioneer

COACH: Marty Mulvihill

LEAGUE/DIVISION: Franklin East/5

LAST YEAR'S RECORD: 6-14

ROSTER: Jaelyn Boliski, Lucianne Burnap, Kaelynn Chabot, Taylor Chase, Allison Clary, Kaylee Fernette, Molly Gouin, Laylah Goulston, Kiara Gruszkowski, Natalie Johnson, Greta Lewis, Dasia Young, Maggie Tsipenyuk, Jacobia Tyminski, Corrie Glenn, Amy Van Doren

OUTLOOK: The Panthers are back on the upswing.

After being a JV-only program in 2022, the Panthers returned to the varsity field the following season and have been building since, with Mulvihill confident his team is on the rise.

A young roster, the Panthers will be led by seniors Clary and Johnson while Tyminski returns in the circle.

“Pioneer worked through some growing pains the last few seasons,” Mulvihill said. “The last two seasons have been building a new culture of positivity and working hard on getting better. We’ve been working on creating a culture where every player has something to contribute to the program and team as a whole. It worked and today we have a bright, young, talented and very energetic team.”

Turners Falls

COACH: Gary Mullins

LEAGUE/DIVISION: Franklin West/5

LAST YEAR'S RECORD: 21-5, D5 state champions

ROSTER: Madi Liimatainen, Mia Marigliano, Marilyn Abarua, Janelle Massey, Madisyn Dietz, Addison Talbot, Ivy Lopez, Shelby Beck, Ameliya Galbraith, Maddie Haight, Autumn Thorton, Kaiya Adam, McKenzie Stafford, Myaa Reed

Source: <https://www.recorder.com/High-school-softball-preview-2025-Can-Turners-Falls-defend-its-state-title-60147352>