

Nebraska Has New Coach, And Same Championship Goals

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — If all goes according to Nebraska offensive lineman Alex Lewis' plan, he'll be fitted for a championship ring at the end of the season.

Asked what a satisfying outcome to the first season under coach Mike Riley would be, Lewis didn't hesitate Wednesday.

"Diamonds on my finger," Lewis said. "That's what I want. That's why I came to Nebraska. I came here to win, and I came here to win big. That's what's on my mind, and that's what's on everybody else's mind."

The Cornhuskers will begin pre-season practice Thursday under the 62-year-old Riley, who came from Oregon State and has never coached

in the Big Ten.

Nebraska is coming off a 9-4 season in which back-to-back November losses to Wisconsin and Minnesota knocked it out of the running for a spot in the Big Ten title game.

Tommy Armstrong is in line to be the third-year starter at quarterback, and De'Mornay Pierson-El could be one of the Big Ten's biggest playmakers as a receiver and return man. But the Huskers, who allowed Wisconsin's Melvin Gordon to run for a FBS-record 408 yards on 25 carries, must improve on defense if they hope to make a run at winning



Riley

the West Division and appearing in the conference title game in Indianapolis.

Linebacker Josh Banderas said the defense could be a quick fix for new coordinator Mark Banker. Banderas called former coach Bo Pelini's defensive playbook "an encyclopedia." He said Banker's system requires less thinking and more attacking.

Nebraska plays Wisconsin and Michigan State at home, and its most difficult Big Ten road game is at Minnesota.

"We set our goals nothing short of a Big Ten championship. Why not?" Banderas said. "We've played all these teams before. Even if the coaches haven't played them

before, we've played them, we know what we're up against. We know how hard we have to work. I think as a team, we're more on the same page than we ever have been before. We know where we want to go. There's no reason in our minds why we can't at least get to Indianapolis and put up a good fight and win the game."

Conference championships once were the standard at Nebraska, but the program hasn't won a title since 1999 in the Big 12. The 15-year drought is the longest since the Huskers went from 1941 to 1963 with no championships.

Typically, coaching changes are made when a program has sunk. But Nebraska won at least nine games

each of the seven seasons under Pelini, and the Huskers were in the Big Ten title game as recently as 2012, albeit a forgettable 39-point loss to Wisconsin.

High expectations are part of the culture at Nebraska, and defensive end Jack Gangwish said those don't change going into a first season under a new coach.

"For me, the thought, 'Don't screw up, and let's make sure we win enough games' — that's never really the case," Gangwish said. "For coach Riley's sake and the new staff's sake, I hope we do really well. I know every guy wants to win a championship. Every guy here wants to win all of them."

S.D. State Amateur Baseball Tournament

Crofton Seeks Long Tourney Run

BY JEREMY HOECK
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Might the loss in the District 6B championship game actually benefit the Crofton Bluejays?

It's certainly possible, according to manager Carl Schieffer.

Crofton, which lost to Tabor in the 6B Tournament final, plays Garretson today (Thursday) at 1 p.m. in the first round of the South Dakota State Amateur Baseball Tournament in Mitchell.

"Going in with a loss on our record doesn't hurt us any, because I think it'll wake up our guys," Schieffer said. "That we need to win."

And winning at state is what Crofton has done better than almost anyone else.

The Bluejays own a 17-4 record at state since the 2010 tournament, and two of those losses (2011 and 2013) came in the state championship game. The fourth came last year in the semifinals.

Because Crofton had typically won the district title in those years, it never had to face a fellow district champion in the first round at state. That changes this year with Garretson.

Garretson, also named the BlueJays, won the District 7B (State Line League) championship and will provide perhaps the stiffest first-round test Crofton has seen in quite some time.

"From what I understand, they're similar to us," Schieffer said. "They play good defense and rely on their pitchers to keep them in games."

Although Crofton has regularly played non-league games against teams from the State Line, it's usually in a situation where neither team throws their best pitchers, Schieffer pointed out.

"It's kind of tough to get a good read, because neither team in that league is usually playing their best guys," he said. "You're getting your guys playing time."

"You get some idea, but you still don't know who isn't there."

In order to move past the first round, Crofton knows exactly what it has to do,

also

■ For A Full Schedule Of First Round Games At The State Tournament, Read: **PAGE 8**



Crofton's Alex Mueller, shown bunting during last week's District 6B Tournament in Irene, will take the field with the Bluejays for today's (Thursday) South Dakota State Amateur Baseball Tournament opener against Garretson.

Freeman Back At State For First Time In Four Years

BY JEREMY HOECK
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Making their first state tournament appearance in four years, the Freeman Black Sox have the unenviable task of playing Alexandria out of the gates.

A tall task, sure, but not one the Black Sox they're unfamiliar with.

Freeman opens the South Dakota State Amateur Baseball Tournament today (Thursday) at 5:30 p.m. against an Alexandria squad that won the 2013 state title and finished runner-up last year.

"That's a tough draw," Freeman manager Brett Scherschligt said this week. "I don't care who you are, that's not a team you want to see."

Scherschligt, though, has beaten the Angels. He was the winning pitcher for Wynot (Nebraska) in last year's state championship game.

The South Central League, as well, hasn't exactly been blown away by Alexandria at the state tournament. Last year, Avon hung right with the Angels in the first round, falling by a 4-3 decision.

It's not as though South Central League members tell each other how to hold down Alexandria, but the experience they share facing each other in league action should help, Scherschligt said.

"It's not something I'm too worried about, because of our league," said Scherschligt, who referenced the two regular season games against Crofton and Wynot — two perennial state title contenders.

"I told the guys the other night, we're playing the caliber of a team we see in our league," he added. "Now, we'll see some pitching we maybe don't see, but the quality of the team is close to what we see."

On the other hand, Freeman's pitching is perhaps the key reason the Black Sox are at state.

Scherschligt (6-0, 2.82 ERA), Eric Hortness (5-2, 3.40

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Bautista, Blue Jays Beat Twins

TORONTO (AP) — Jose Bautista hit a grand slam, Edwin Encarnacion and Josh Donaldson homered and the Toronto Blue Jays beat the Minnesota Twins 9-7 Wednesday night for their fourth straight win.

Encarnacion hit a three-run drive and Donaldson added a two-run shot. Toronto has homered in 17 of 18 games since the All-Star break, with 10 multihomer games in that span.

The Blue Jays will try Thursday to sweep the four-game series between wild card contenders. The slumping Twins have lost four in a row and nine of 11.

Miguel Sano homered and had three RBIs for the Twins, who had been held to one run in four of their previous five games.

Sano hit an RBI single and Trevor Plouffe doubled home two runs as the Twins jumped out to a 3-0 lead in the first against Drew Hutchison (10-2).

Toronto answered in the

bottom half against right-hander Tyler Duffey (0-1), who was making his major league debut. Troy Tulowitzki walked and Donaldson hit his 29th homer, tying a career high.

Donaldson has homered in three straight games and six of the past 10. He has a 23-game hitting streak against Minnesota, the longest active streak by any player against a single opponent.

Bautista made it 6-3 in the second with his fifth career grand slam and 24th home run of the season.

The slam gave Toronto its 38th four-run inning of the season, more than any other team.

Duffey allowed only two home runs in 132 minor league innings at Double-A and Triple-A this season, but matched that total in two innings against a powerful Blue Jays lineup.

Duffey allowed six runs and five hits in two innings. Encarnacion made it 9-3 with a three-run drive off

reliever J.R. Graham in the fourth, his 20th. The second-deck drive traveled an estimated 462 feet.

Joe Mauer hit a two-run single in the fifth and Sano followed with a two-run homer, his fifth, cutting it to 9-7.

Hutchison gave up seven runs, three of them earned, in five innings. He has allowed an AL-high 81 runs and hasn't reached the seventh inning since June 6 against Houston.

Liam Hendriks, Brett Cecil and Mark Lowe all worked one inning of relief before LaTroy Hawkins finished for his third save.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Twins: OF Byron Buxton (left thumb) could begin a rehab assignment with Triple-A Rochester this Friday, manager Paul Molitor said.

Blue Jays: RHP Marcus Stroman (right knee) is scheduled to throw off a mound next Wednesday and, if all goes well, could begin a minor league rehab assignment Aug. 21.

Learning From The Bucks



JEREMY HOECK/P&D

This young player, left, takes a handoff from Yankton High School senior Sheldon Gant during a Junior Football Camp on Wednesday evening at the fields north of YHS. The Bucks will open their pre-season practices next week.