

Babe Ruth 9-Under Region Comes To Sertoma Park Today

BY KEITH A. BROCKBERG
P&D Correspondent

This weekend, the residents of Yankton are getting a chance to see both ends of the youth baseball spectrum.

While the big boys who wear the American Legion uniforms are competing for a state title in the State American Legion Tournament down at Riverside Field, 9-year olds from six states will compete at Avera and 1st Dakota Fields on Yankton's northeast side in the Cal Ripken Midwest Plains Regional today

(Thursday) through Sunday.

As the host team, Yankton will take on a team from Missouri to start the Regional action at 1 p.m. today on First Dakota Field.

The pool-play format will continue the rest of Thursday as Missouri 2 takes on Colorado at 3 p.m. and Colorado 2 and Kansas 2 face off, also at 3 p.m. The

■ The P&D Will Have Notebook Stories From The Cal Ripken Regional On Friday and Saturday.

team representing Nebraska will play Kansas at 5 p.m. before all teams take the field in uniform to participate in tournament-opening ceremonies at 7 p.m.

Thursday night will conclude with Yankton's second game, a tilt against North Dakota at 8 p.m.

Friday's action heats up with nine games slated as the nine teams continue to battle for seeds and a chance to play on Saturday.

Kansas and Missouri 2 play on Avera Field while North Dakota faces Missouri

on 1st Dakota Field to kick off the Friday action at 10 a.m.

Yankton, playing in Pool B, takes on Kansas 2 at noon and finishes the day against Colorado 2 at 6 p.m.

Other Friday match-ups include Colorado taking on Nebraska at noon, North Dakota plays Colorado 2 at 2 p.m., Nebraska versus Missouri 2 at 4 p.m., Missouri against Kansas 2 at 4 p.m., and Kansas against Colorado at 6 p.m.

After the dust clears on Friday, the seeds of Pool A and B will battle it out

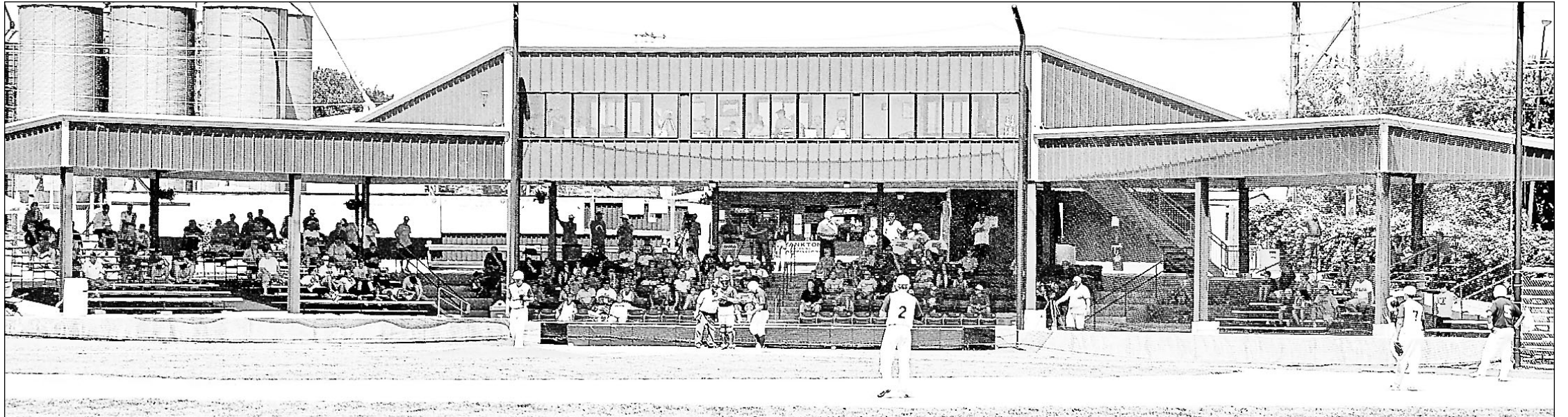
Saturday for a possible Championship game berth.

Saturday's games begin at 10 a.m. The Championship game is slated for 10 a.m. Sunday on 1st Dakota Field.

Tie-breakers for the tournament are in this order: overall record, head-to-head results, and least amount of runs given up.

First Dakota and Avera Fields are located across from the Sertoma Park complex on the North side of 19th Street.

FACELIFT CONTINUING FOR RIVERSIDE



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Yankton's Riverside Field, shown here during Wednesday afternoon's action at the S.D. State American Legion Baseball Tournament, has undergone a number of changes in the past few years, including new grandstands, a new pressbox, a new scoreboard and renovated dugouts. Further modifications could include the installation of field turf, a project currently on the Yankton Baseball Association radar, officials say.

Further Changes Could Impact Riverside, YBA

BY JEREMY HOECK
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The Riverside Field that teams and fans across the state will experience this week looks vastly different from the one in place the last time Yankton hosted the state legion baseball tournament in 1987.

Yet, as local officials are quick to point out, there are further changes coming to the baseball scene in Yankton.

Chief among those desired improvements are field turf at Riverside Field and an additional full-sized complex at another location in town.

Both proposed projects, still in the discussion phase, have a key similarity between them, according to Yankton Baseball Association (YBA) president Jeff Benjamin.

"The good news is everybody has ideas to do something," he said. "We all want what's best for all the kids in town who love the game. Right now, it's just a matter of pursuing it and trying to make it happen."

Yankton has six teams — one amateur, one American Legion and four VFW Teener — that play and practice on Riverside Field. Mount Marty College plays on the field in the spring, as well as the Yankton club high school varsity and JV squads.

During the summer, Riverside Field hosts approximately 200 games, regular season and tournament, and will host the S.D. State A Legion Tournament this week.

With the addition of a second full-sized baseball field in town, there would be the potential to hold more home games and additional tournaments, Benjamin said. Yankton also plays Babe Ruth

and Cal Ripken baseball games at the Sertoma Park complex.

"In my opinion, that's something that needs to happen," he said. "It makes sense to have a sports complex to accommodate all those sports. If you could have regulation-sized fields, we'd be in better shape."

Drive For A Complex

Yet, on the issue of constructing a new sports complex, the main sticking points became land availability and cost.

A group of youth sports officials has been in discussions with the Human

Services Center (HSC) about possibly building a complex near the existing location of Lewis & Clark Soccer Park.

According to minutes from last December's Yankton Park Advisory Board meeting, HSC would be willing to a 50-year lease with an option for another 50 years on its land so "there would be no costs for obtaining the grounds."

However, as Parks and Recreation director Todd Larson said, the state government has indicated it might look to sell that land to get it off the books, which could prove too costly for a local endeavor.

"If the land is sold out at HSC property, we would maybe look to buy the land," Larson said. "But there again, we realize that it might just be too expensive."

Larson said if available land was purchased somewhere in Yankton, the proposed project could bring in flag football, indoor tennis, wrestling, batting cages and other sports. Saying that fundraising "will be a huge part of this," Larson also said parking, concessions and other adjacent buildings would need to be included.

In the same Advisory Board meeting, a small group planned to approach local hotels about imposing a room fee of \$1-2 to generate revenue for the complex.

"That group is still out there and still working behind the scenes," Larson said. "The issue will be if that (HSC) land is not available, what other ground in or around Yankton would be well-suited for youth sports?"

On the issue of baseball in particular, a second field would not only relieve the amount of traffic at Riverside, but would put Yankton on a short list to host some prestigious tournaments.

Mount Marty College would be able to at least enter its name in the running to host the Great Plains Athletic Conference (GPAC) Baseball Tournament, which requires two fields, according to MMC baseball coach Andy Bernatow.

Additionally, the Yankton First Dakota Post 12 legion team might be able to expand its annual Lewis & Clark Wooden Bat Classic, held every June in three sites — Riverside Field, Vermillion and Hartington, Neb.

"Another field would give you more

field times for our local kids, and that would only help them," said Bernatow, also a YBA board member. "Ever since I came here in the fall of 1995, it's always been talked about, but it's been something we haven't been able to accomplish."

Riverside Improvements

When it comes to its existing full-sized baseball field, Yankton has made strides to improve what it already has.

In the past five years, Riverside Field has undergone a number of facelifts.

Among the projects have been new grandstands, a new pressbox, a new scoreboard sponsored by First Dakota National Bank, and renovated dugouts last summer.

Next on the radar for YBA is the installation of field turf on the infield, which would eliminate rainout concerns and would allow more games to be played.

Turf is already in place in front of the new dugouts, along the backstop behind home plate, in the bullpen catchers area and also in the first base coaches box — all high traffic areas.

Saying field turf is still in the "infant stages," Benjamin also said it would take between \$350,000-\$500,000 to install artificial turf over the entire field. Instead, YBA will likely turf the infield first in the fall of 2012, he said.

"I can't really put a timeline on it right now, but we would obviously like to do it as soon as possible," Benjamin said. "The guy from the company we've looked at needs 30-45 days to set up, so that's something you can do in the fall."

"Next fall is probably our best guess." In addition to aesthetic changes, field

turf would also mean the Mount Marty College squad could begin hosting games earlier in the year.

This spring, Mount Marty didn't play a home game until March 24, already a month into the season after playing in tournaments in warmer climates — including Oklahoma and the annual spring break trip to Florida.

"You could have a situation with us (MMC) where not only could we play on our own field earlier, but we might be able to bring other college teams to town for games," Bernatow said. "I'm sure schools in cooler climates like ours would love to have that option."

In recent seasons, the Lancers have played on synthetic field turf at the Metrodome in Minneapolis, Minn., and at the NAIA National Tournament in Lubbock, Texas.

None of the 11 schools in the GPAC play its baseball games on field turf, and the only area school that does is Buena Vista, in Storm Lake, Iowa.

With more and more schools seeking to reverse that trend, Bernatow said the previously-held misconceptions that turf disrupts the natural flow of a game are being proven false.

"Back in the day, you would hear people say that turf isn't true baseball, that you don't get true hops," he said. "Now the fibers are longer and the dirt is different, so it plays more like grass."

"There are just a lot of positives to having turf."

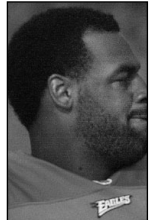
Among those benefits to playing on field turf would be a drastic decrease in

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AP Source: Vikings Get QB McNabb

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — The Minnesota Vikings have acquired quarterback Donovan McNabb from the Washington Redskins in exchange for a sixth-round draft pick.

Two people with knowledge of the transaction confirmed the deal to The Associated Press on Wednesday night. They requested anonymity because McNabb has yet to officially sign his restructured contract.



McNabb

McNabb had to agree to restructure the five-year, \$78 million deal he signed with the Redskins because the Vikings don't have enough cap room to fit him in with the way the deal is structured. The terms of his new deal were not immediately available.

The finalized agreement, which was first reported by ESPN, also includes a conditional sixth-round pick in 2013 if McNabb meets certain performance-based criteria.

McNabb gives the Vikings a veteran quarterback while they groom first-round draft pick Christian Ponder, who was drafted 12th overall out of Florida State in April to be the team's long-term answer at the position. The original preference for coach Leslie Frazier and the Vikings was to have Ponder start Week 1 in San Diego, with a veteran backup there just in case.

That was before the NFL lock-out prevented players from working out with coaches all summer and put Ponder behind schedule in his development. That makes it

more imperative for the Vikings, who had Brett Favre on the roster the past two seasons, to add a quarterback they think can win games with a roster full of veterans while Ponder gets up to speed.

From the sounds of it, Ponder isn't conceding anything just yet.

"Excited to have McNabb join," Ponder wrote on Twitter on Wednesday morning, perhaps jumping the gun just a little bit.

"Will learn a lot from a Pro Bowler. But that doesn't mean I'm not still fighting to start week 1!"

The trade ends a tumultuous one-year run in Washington for McNabb. The 12-year veteran was benched twice last season and threw 14 touchdowns and 15 interceptions in 13 games. He completed 58 percent of his passes for 3,377 yards, and his agent Fletcher Smith sparred publicly with head coach Mike Shanahan and offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan.

Even before the deal was completed, some Redskins players were already treating McNabb's departure as a foregone conclusion. The writing has been on the wall for some time in Washington, and news of the discussions with the Vikings only served to validate that feeling.

"You see a guy that's been a Pro Bowler six times," linebacker Lorenzo Alexander said. "He was going to come in and really help us win more games, but it didn't work out. Relationships broke down, and now he's not here, but you can't really focus on that. You've got to continue to move forward."

In Minnesota, McNabb's acquisition would show accomplished

veterans such as Adrian Peterson, Antoine Winfield, Jared Allen and Kevin Williams that the team is still in a "win now" mode and has not started a rebuild around Ponder.

Frazier has maintained all along that the Vikings are not rebuilding, even after they went 6-10 last season and finished in last place in the NFC North for the first time since 1990.

Ponder was billed as the most NFL-ready quarterback in the 2011 class, but not being able to work with new offensive coordinator Bill Musgrave and most of his teammates at various minicamps and organized team activities throughout the summer would make it a bigger challenge for him to be ready to start in San Diego on Sept. 11.

Ponder said last week during a workout at the University of Minnesota that he still was aiming to be the starter from Day 1.

"That's what I'm pushing for," he said. "That's what I'm hoping for. So we'll see what happens."

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Baseball: Sutton Tops PWGS For Class C Legion Title

HERSHEY, Neb. — Lance Sponberg pitched a shutout as Sutton blanked Palmer-Wolbach-Greeley-Spalding 3-0 for the Neb. Class C Junior Legion State Tournament title on Wednesday afternoon in Hershey, Neb.

Sutton scored single runs in the second, fourth and sixth innings. Max Olson doubled in the loss for PWGS.

SUTTON 5, ELMWOOD-MURDOCH 4: In a game that was continued Wednesday after a rain delay Tuesday night, Sutton advanced to the championship with the come-from-behind win.

Tyler Keenan tripled for Sutton, which trailed 3-2 until the bottom of the fourth inning when it pulled ahead 4-3.

Area C-2 Seniors

Pender 1, Wakefield 0
WAKEFIELD, Neb. — Zac Johnson pitched 5 1/3 innings of scoreless ball to lead Pender past Wakefield 1-0 in the championship game of the Area C-2 Senior Legion Tournament, Wednesday in Wakefield, Neb.

Amateurs

District 6B

Tabor 8, Crofton 7

LESTERVILLE — Doug Vanecek hit a pair of home runs and Tyler Edler hit a go-ahead two-run double in the eighth inning as Tabor rallied past Crofton 8-7 in District 6B Tournament semifinal action Tuesday night in Lesterville.

Tabor will play top seed Wynot for the district title on Saturday night at 7 p.m.

Gary Kortan got the win in relief for Tabor, which trailed 5-2 after four innings.

For Crofton, Tony Guenther had three hits and Chad Guenther added two hits. Scot Donner took the loss.

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Seth Erdmann, Scot Donner (5) and Carl Schieffer, Joe Vavruska, Gary Kortan (7) and Steve Fefjar

Area C-1 Seniors

Creighton 6, Hartington 0
HARTINGTON, Neb. — Klay Fuchtmann hit a three-run homer to lead top-seeded Creighton past Hartington 6-0 for the Area C-1 Senior Legion Tournament championship on Tuesday night in Hartington, Neb.

The victory sends Creighton to the Nebraska State Tournament, while Hartington will take the host berth in the tournament which will be played at Creighton, Neb.

Collin Neuman got the win for Creighton, which allowed only two hits. Keenan Sudbeck took the loss.