



P&D FILE PHOTO

Elk Point-Jefferson's Lexie Branson, 2, goes up to block St. Thomas More's Mycalynn Osborne during the Class A consolation championship match, Saturday at Sioux Falls Arena. Branson, who set a Class A tournament record with 1.83 blocks per game, has signed to attend Mount Marty College and play volleyball for the Lancers.

EPJ's Branson To Play At MMC

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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A bad turn of luck helped Mount Marty College find one of the top small-school blockers in South Dakota.

Elk Point-Jefferson standout Lexie Branson, who helped the Huskies to three straight state Class A Volleyball Tournament appearances and set state-tournament record with a 1.83 block per game average, will attend MMC and play volleyball for the Lancers, the institution announced on Tuesday.



Branson

Branson had been the “other” middle during her sophomore and junior seasons, as teammate Kelly Reed racked up the attention. When Reed graduated and headed for NCAA Division III Concordia-Moorhead (Minn.), Branson stepped into the spotlight, recording 394 kills and 88 blocks to lead the Huskies to another state tournament appearance.

But because Branson didn't step to the forefront until her senior year, she was overlooked by college coaches, including Mount Marty's Candice Climer.

“I wanted to stay close, and (the offers I got) weren't good offers, and they didn't have good nursing programs,” Branson said. “I was accepted to USD (the University of South Dakota). Accepted, registered and ready to go.”

EPJ head volleyball coach Traci Bennett-Kollbaum, though, knew the 5-10 middle could play at that level.

“She was telling me about the fact that she was going to be short a middle, and was asking me if I knew of any,” Kollbaum said. “I told her that I had an awesome one, but you'd need to talk her into playing.”

After watching some film of Branson in action, Climer invited her up to MMC to check out the school and play some with a few of the Lancer players who stayed around Yankton for the summer. From there, everything fell into place.

“She fit in so well,” Climer said. “It was funny how it all came about.”

Climer called up Branson. Not long after, Bran-

NL Rocks Verlander On Way To All-Star Victory

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Pablo Sandoval and Melky Cabrera keyed a five-run blitz against Justin Verlander in the first inning Tuesday night, and the National League romped to an 8-0 win over the American League and its third straight All-Star game victory.

Giants teammate Matt Cain started a strong NL pitching performance, combining with 10 relievers on a six-hitter that extended the American League's scoreless streak to 14 innings — its longest since 1995-97.

Sandoval hit the first bases-loaded triple in an All-Star game, and Ryan Braun and Dan Uggla also drove in runs against Verlander, who couldn't control his 100 mph heat.

Cabrera singled and scored the first

run, then hit a two-run homer against Matt Harrison in the fourth as the NL rolled to the third-largest margin of victory in All-Star history.

The start couldn't have tasted much better for the National League, which was trying to earn home-field advantage in the World Series for the third straight year.

The reward sure came in handy last season, when the Cardinals rallied to win the final two games against the Texas Rangers at Busch Stadium to capture their 11th championship. The team with home-field advantage has won three straight World Series, and six of the last nine.

Tony La Russa certainly enjoyed watching his guys circle the bases

Tuesday night.

The former Cardinals manager retired after last year's World Series, but was asked to call the shots for the NL team one more time. He had vowed all week to manage the game to win.

Verlander was coming off two complete games in his last three starts, and had only allowed seven runs in the first inning all season. But the reigning AL MVP and Cy Young Award winner ran into trouble almost from the start, giving up a one-out single to Cabrera and Braun's RBI double.

The Detroit Tigers' ace recovered to strike out Joey Votto, but walked Carlos Beltran and Buster Posey — the latter on four pitches. Sandoval came to the plate with the bases loaded and ham-

mered a curve off the right-field wall, driving in three runs with his first triple of 2012.

Dan Uggla followed with an RBI single to deep shortstop to give the NL a 5-0 lead.

Verlander was replaced by Joe Nathan in the second inning, an embarrassing way to leave his fifth All-Star game. Verlander had allowed five earned runs in a start only once all season, and hadn't given up five runs in any inning since April 11, 2010, against the Indians.

“Obviously you don't want to go out like that,” Verlander said. “That's why I don't try to throw 100 (mph) in the first inning, but this is for the fans. It usually doesn't work out too well for me.”

Baseball | SCL Notebook

Roach Finds Success In Final Year



JEREMY HOECK/P&D

Avon Bards pitcher Bill Roach, at age 48, is having one of the best seasons of his long amateur baseball career. He is currently 1-1 in six appearances, with a 4.01 ERA and 13 strikeouts in 24 2/3 innings entering Tuesday night's game at Freeman.

48-Year-Old Avon Pitcher Hopes To End His Career With State Tourney Berth

BY JEREMY HOECK
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AVON — Nearly twice the age of many of the hitters he faces, Bill Roach is still finding ways to get people out.

At age 48, almost 49, the right-handed throwing pitcher for the Avon Bards wouldn't, on first glance, strike fear into any hitter — no matter with aluminum bats or wood bats.

His final season in the South Central League, let alone amateur baseball all together, is proving to be quite possibly Roach's best, however.

“I really think people take Bill for granted,” Dan Bures, Avon's veteran catcher, said this week. “You could probably just ask people in Scotland. I'm sure they'd be amazed that he's 48 years old.”

Roach threw a complete game seven-hitter, striking out seven in a 9-0 victory at Scotland on June 21 — his only victory of the season. Roach also combined with Nate Harrington in a previous two-hitter back in May.

“For me personally, I've hit two homers off him in my career, I think, and I would have never guessed he was that old,” Bures added.

Prior to his start Tuesday night in Freeman, Roach had appeared in six games for Avon and had a record of 1-1 with a 4.01 earned run average. He had struck out 13 batters in 24 2/3 innings.

Far from eye-opening, though considering he still throws harder than most people his age, Roach deflects credit to his teammates.

“I've been doing what I normally do, but the guys behind me are really helping me out,” he said last week before a home game against Irene. “There's nothing like getting a little run support. “I haven't had a lot of that before.”

The same goes for success. With his sixth amateur team since he turned 30 years old, Roach finally has a legitimate chance to play in an event missing from his resume — the state tournament.

Coming into Tuesday night, Avon had an overall record of 10-7 this season, tied for fourth place (9-6) in the South Central League.

Five teams from the league earn a bid to the Class B State Tournament in Mitchell next month, and discounting first-place Yankton (which is Class A), Avon would be in solid shape for an appearance — naturally, something that drew Roach to Avon this summer.

“He tells me that there's a different feel to this team,” Bures said. “In the past, the teams he played on were almost playing games just to keep the team going, not necessarily to win. This year, we really started with plans to make the state tournament.

“We looked at the league and thought, ‘Hey, this could be the year.’”

For Roach, it is literally his last chance to play in the state tournament: He is planning to move

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Baseball: Wynot, Crofton Score Home Victories

WYNOT, Neb. — Lee Heimes hit two home runs to lead Wynot to a 5-2 victory over Irene in South Central League amateur baseball action on Tuesday.

Heimes' first solo shot provided the game's first run, in the first inning. After Irene tied the game in the sixth, Heimes blasted another solo shot to put the Expos ahead for good.

Mike King had two of Irene's five hits.

Heimes picked up the win in relief of Brett Wiebelhaus, who left after the Cardinals tied the game in the sixth. Brian Drapeaux took the loss.

Wynot, 10-6 in the SCL, hosts Menno and Irene hosts Freeman on Thursday.

IRENE.....	000	001	100	— 2	5 2
WYNOT.....	100	002	11X	— 5	7 2

Brian Drapeaux, Matt Sees (8) and Jeremy Rempp; Brett Wiebelhaus, Lee Heimes (6) and Scott Heime

Yankton 5, Tabor 4 (10)

TABOR — Yankton's Dillon Lambley broke a 4-4 tie with a sacrifice fly in the top of the tenth, lifting the Tappers to a 5-4 victory over Tabor in SCL action Tuesday night.

Yankton led until Doug Vanacek's RBI double in the bottom of the ninth tied the game at four.

Derrick Nelson went 3-4 with a double, and Mathias Godsil and Jesse Bailey had two hits each to lead the way.

Josh Engquist struck out 14 in a 10-inning complete game, allowing two hits and one earned run for the win. Jon Vavruska took the loss.

Yankton hosts Crofton on Thursday. The game will mark Fan Appreciation night for the Tappers.

Lesterville 7, Menno 2

MENNO — The Lesterville Broncs scored four first-inning runs and never looked back, beating Menno 7-2 in SCL action Tuesday night.

Zach Johnson doubled and singled, and Jason Vaith had two hits to lead Lesterville.

Tyler Miller doubled for Menno.

Johnson struck out eight batters in 5 2/3 innings of relief to pick up the win. Doug Hall took the loss.

Lesterville travels to Scotland and Menno (2-14) travels to Wynot on Thursday.

LESTERVILLE.....	400	210	000	— 7	8 1
MENNO.....	100	010	000	— 2	6 2

Darren Svachna, Zach Johnson (4) and Ian Powell; Doug Hall, Tate Bruckner (7) and Bruckner, Jason Larson (7)

Crofton 15, Scotland 0

CROFTON, Neb. — Scott Donner had four hits and four other Crofton players had multi-hit games as the Bluejays beat Scotland 15-0 in South Central League amateur baseball action on Tuesday.

Donner had two doubles, two singles and two RBI for Crofton. Kyle Mueller had a double and two singles. Nick Hegge also had three hits, driving in two runs. Bill Gunether and Adam Wiebold each had two hits. Carl Schieffer drove in three runs in the victory.

Trevor Arens pitched the first four innings of the five-inning contest for the win. Michael Kronaizl took the loss.

Crofton, 14-2, travels to Yankton and Scotland, 4-10, hosts Lesterville on Thursday.

SCOTLAND.....	000	000	— 0	3 1
CROFTON.....	443	13	— 15	17 0

Michael Kronaizl, Bryan Fuks (3) and Casey Comstock; Trevor Arens, Seth Erdmann (5) and Carl Schieffer

American Legion

S.F. West 5-10,

Yankton 1-1

SIOUX FALLS — Sioux Falls Post 15 West swept Yankton First Dakota Post 12 in American Legion baseball action on Tuesday in Sioux Falls.

In the opener, a 5-1 West win, Yankton got hits from Sam Wendte, Nik Davis, Kory Bromley, Mike Janish, Lane Sawatzke and Alex Wagner. Wagner went the distance on the mound in the loss.

In the nightcap, a 10-1 setback, Davis had three hits, including two doubles. Termansen took the loss.



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D

Freeman's Lee Scherschligt puts the ball in play during the Black Sox's South Central League amateur game with Avon on Tuesday in Freeman.

Yankton, 16-12, travels to Norfolk, Neb., today (Wednesday).

VFW Teener

Black Sox 16, Norfolk 3

NORFOLK, Neb. — The Yankton CorTrust Black Sox made quick work of Norfolk, Neb., scor-

ing a 16-3 decision in VFW Teener baseball action on Tuesday.

Brady Hale had three hits, including a double, and Jordan Lightner and Landon Withrow had two hits each for Yankton. Blake Smith, Tyler Wenande, Ben Cameron, Will Steward, Tyler Highland and Greg Hauer added hits.

Austin Johnson, Withrow and Cameron each pitched for Yankton.

The Black Sox, 16-19, play in the Sioux Falls Tournament this weekend.