

State Softball Begins Today

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Seven teams from Yankton will participate in the South Dakota Amateur Softball Association's state girls' fast-pitch tournament, which begins today (Friday) at Sherman Park and Harmodon Park in Sioux Falls.

The Yankton Spitfire, in their final season under coaches Robin and Jerry Wirth, will compete in the 18-under 'A' division. The Xtreme and Crush will each compete in the 14-under 'B' division. The Shamrocks will compete in the 12-under 'B' division. The Fury Red, Fury White and Fury Wildcats will all compete in the 10-under 'B' division.

Teams from Vermillion, Dakota Valley, Elk Point-Jefferson, Hurley, Irene-Wakonda, Parkston, Platte, Scotland, Springfield, Tabor, Tripp, Tyndall and Wagner are also scheduled to participate. (It is possible there are more area towns represented. This list is based in the team names listed on the tournament brackets.)

Thirteen champions in five age groups will be crowned on Sunday.

Here is a look at the Yankton teams participating in the event.

Spitfire

Experience up the middle has played a key role for Yankton's 18-under squad (18-14-1).

The Spitfire's middle infielders — shortstop Karlee Kozak (.448, 12 doubles, 7 triples, 1 HR, 28 RBI, 29 runs) and second baseman Jess Wirth (.439, 11 doubles, 2 triples, 1 HR, 11 RBI, 36 runs) — both have a year of experience for Mount Marty College and are in their final season of youth fastpitch. Catcher Brooke Loecker (.192, 3 doubles, 9 RBI) is also in her final season.

"It helps having Jess and Karlee," said Spitfire head coach Robin Wirth. "The girls look up to them."

The team had many new faces this season, absorbing what was left of the last year's Lightning team. But the squad, half of which were still eligible to play in the 16-under division this year, has come together well.

"We have a lot of new faces, but most of them knew each other," Coach Wirth said. "They gelled, and they get along pretty well."

Jaclyn Arens (.351, 7 doubles, 1 triple, 26 RBI) has handled much of the pitching duties, going 16-7-1. Madison Dangler (1-5) and Bailey Kortan (0-1) have also pitched.

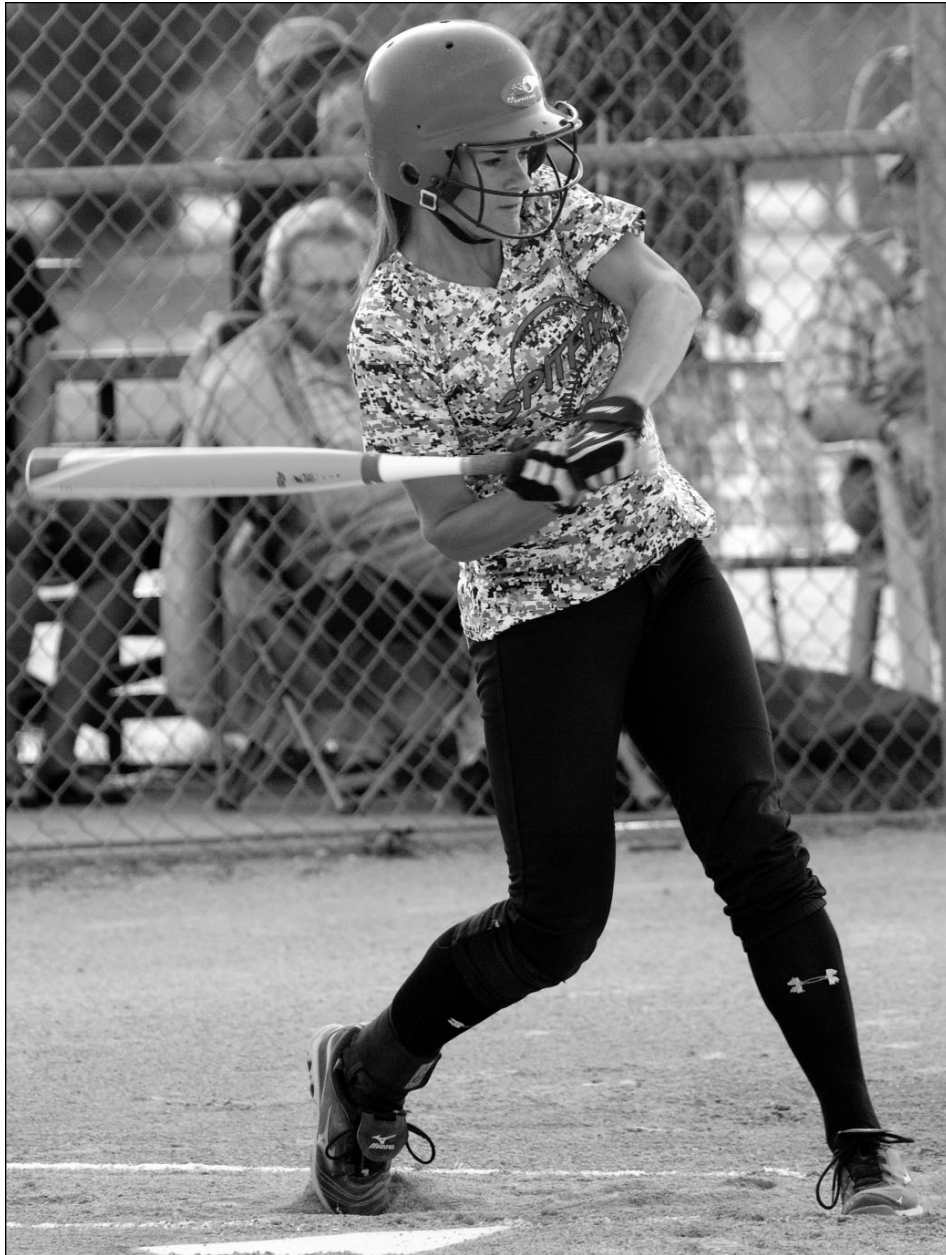
Offensively, Heather Hauer (.413, 3 doubles, 14 RBI) and Bailey Kortan (.380, 9 doubles, 1 triple, 15 RBI, 30 runs) have provided a spark. Allison Sexton (.365, 6 doubles, 2 triples, 20 RBI), Arens and Sophie Drotzmann (.330, 6 doubles, 17 RBI) have all batted above .300. Dangler (.286, 2 triples) and Liz Suing (.136, 2 doubles) have also been key contributors at times.

While the 18-under 'A' division has just eight teams, the field is balanced, according to Coach Wirth.

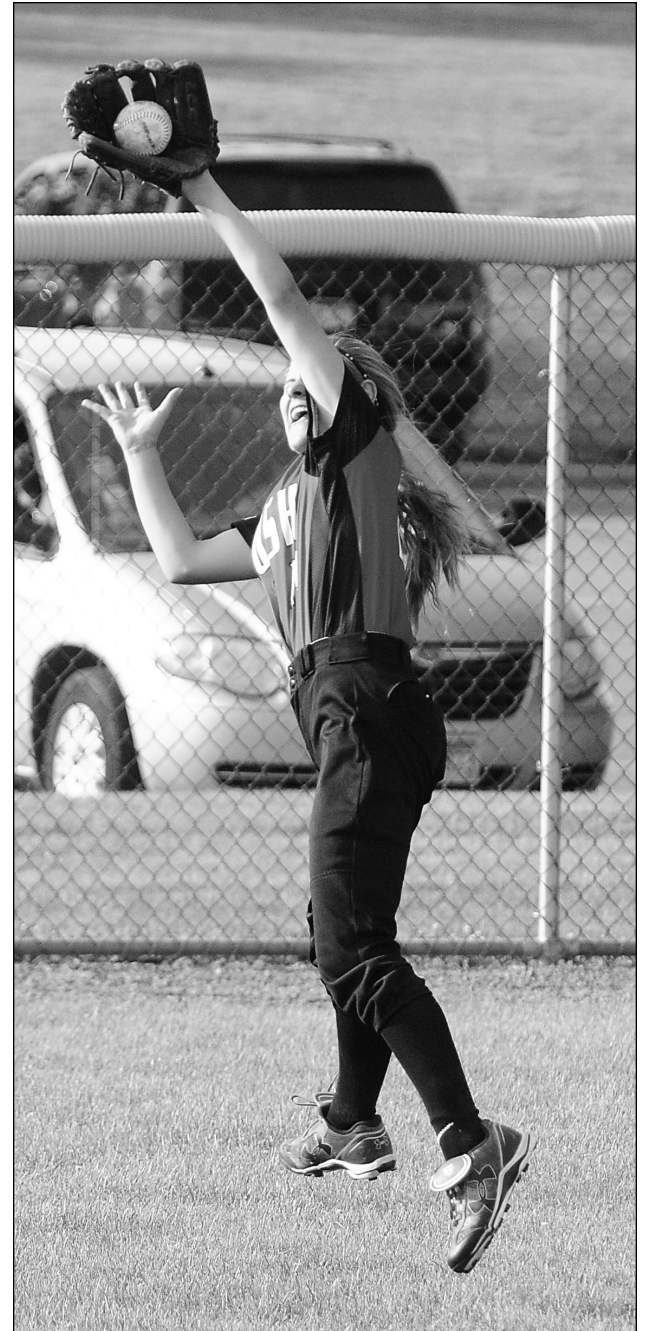
"The only team I haven't seen is the Rapid City team, but it's a pretty even playing field," she said. "We've played well in all our tournaments. I want to see them keep playing the way we have."

"Hopefully we'll do well and bring home some hardware."

The Spitfire open play Friday at 6:30 p.m. against the Impact. All games in their bracket are on Field 'A' of Sherman Park.



Spitfire's Jess Wirth (left) and Crush's Bridget Nolz (right) are among the players from seven Yankton teams participating in the SDASA state girls' fastpitch tourney, beginning today (Friday) in Sioux Falls.



P&D FILE PHOTOS

Xtreme

The Yankton Xtreme (17-28) have overcome a key injury and a challenging schedule as they prepared for state.

"We faced tough competition. Our goal was to go against the best in our age group," said coach Kim Velk. "I think we're set for state because of we faced several 'A' level teams."

Besides facing tough teams, the Xtreme also faced adversity with a season-ending injury to infielder Madie Cordell (.333, 1 HR).

"We lost Madie early, but the rest of the infielders have stepped up," Velk said. "Holly Mines has pitched a lot of innings. Emily Oswald has been the key to our outfield."

Holly Mines has 80 strikeouts on the season, and ranks second on the team with a .365 batting average (7 doubles, 7 triples). First baseman Traia Hubbard leads the in both batting average (.387) and home runs (3). Lexie McCorkell (3B/P/LF; .344), Alix Peterka (C/SS; .333, 5 doubles, 4 triples, 1 HR), Lilly Ryken (OF/2B; .333, 5 doubles) and Oswald (.329, 3 doubles, 2 triples, 1 HR) are all batting over .300 on the season.

Bailey Peterka (2B/P; .298, 2 doubles), Ivy Mines (.288), Megan McCorkell (LF/3B; .262), Maddie Henrickson (3B; .227), Merlye Mason (RF; .214) and Grace Roy (RF; .180) have all provided key hits throughout the summer.

The Xtreme face the South Dakota Flash Attack today at 11 a.m. to open the tournament.

"We're hoping for them to show up and play the game they are capable of playing," Velk said. "If our 'A' team shows up, we are a force to be reckoned with."

Crush

A young 14-under Crush (29-26)

squad has lived up to its name, pounding the ball offensively, according to coach Mark Vellek.

"There were a lot of doubts in moving up to 14-under. Half our team is still 12-under eligible," he said. "The girls have come along very well. I look forward to next season with a full year of experience at this level under their belts."

The Crush have utilized five pitchers, from hard-throwers like Kara Ulmer and Bridget Nolz to control pitchers like Payton Vellek and Bailey Kenney. Bailey Sejnoha, the team's fifth pitcher, had stepped away from pitching but returned this season.

"Kara's done a great job. Bridget took lessons, and is mentally and physically stronger," Coach Vellek said. "Payton can put the ball where it needs to be. Bailey Kenney is a control pitcher who is very accurate. Bailey Sejnoha has worked hard to get back into the rotation."

Brooke Madsen has handled much of the catching duties, throwing out 21 would-be base stealers this season. Britany Davis has filled in behind the plate, as well as in a utility role.

First baseman Elsie Marquardt and third baseman Chloe Koletzky have taken control of the corner spots, with Nolz at short and Rachel Hamberg and Vellek sharing time at second. Sejnoha has anchored left field, with Kenney in center and Riley Andrus in right.

"We've prided ourselves on good defense," Coach Vellek said. "Our hitting has been phenomenal, and we have three or four girls that can lay down a bunt when needed. Small ball is very important at this level."

The Crush open state tournament play against Dakota Valley today at 12:30 p.m.

"If we keep it all together, we have a chance," Coach Vellek said. "We have to

have a little luck and play our best games."

Shamrocks

The Shamrocks (18-16-2) survived a "rocky" start to get down the stretch.

"We started slow and had a little internal drama," said coach Ramon Romero. "We've rebounded and become a team. It's really helped us become a lot more competitive."

The issues became a growing experience for the team, he said.

"The struggles we had forced them to grow up a little bit," Romero said. "Now they're playing for the team. It's been a great learning experience for all of them."

Brooklyn Bernatow, Gabby Pietila and Carissa Salvatori have handled pitching duties, and played in the infield when not toting the rubber. Hannah Muth has also worked in the infield. Larkyn Mason, Jady Wishon and Abby Newman had all played in the outfield. Lauren Eidsness, Kelsey Oswald and Jessica Reinhardt have all played both infield and outfield.

The Shamrocks do not play until Saturday, opening against the winner of the all-Sioux Falls Diamonds Krush vs. Riverdogs matchup. Start time is 11 a.m.

"I'm not looking at wins or losses. I just want them to compete and have a good time," Romero said. "We'll let the rest take care of itself."

Fury Red

The Fury Red (16-12-1) squad, now in its third season together, is now also a study group, according to coach Chad Gordon.

"They've become students of the game. They make sure they learn to do things correctly," he said. "They're starting to appreciate the game, and they enjoy watching other teams play."

That "study" has also added up to results on the field, Gordon said.

"They've made a ton of progress," he said.

Ellie Karolevitz has been a leader on the pitching rubber for the Red team, accounting for 10 victories. Molly Savey, Kate Beeman and Annika Gordon have also handled pitching duties. Tori Vellek and Madisyn Bietz have shared duties behind the plate.

Beeman, Jillian Eidsness, Savey, Elle Feser and Karolevitz have anchored the infield. Gordon, Callie Boomsma, Brooklyn Townsend, Britta Pietila and Lexi Madson have shared outfield duties.

The Fury Red face the Brandon Rage at 8 p.m. tonight at Sherman Park. Saturday and Sunday play in the division will be held at Harmodon Park.

"Our goal is to be competitive," Coach Gordon said. "Hopefully we can win a couple, three games."

Fury White

With a year of competition under their belts, the Fury White (9-18) squad have a better grasp of what is expected on the field, according to coach Todd Chance.

"These last two years have been a big learning experience," he said. "Our hitting has come a long ways. We're still learning the game, how to move and get in the right spots defensively, but overall we've come a long ways."

Grace Behrns, Brynn Kenney and Emmay Yost have shared pitching duties for the White team, and have primarily been in the infield when not on the pitching rubber. Thea Chance, Taryn Fitzgerald, Camryn Koletzky and Nora Welker have also spent the majority of their time in the infield. Madelyn Eidsness, Frannie Kouri, Shae Rumsey, Katie Schulte, Sydney Serck and Chloe Vander Tuig have

all spent time both in the infield and outfield.

The Fury White open against the Vermillion Tigers, today at 12:30 p.m., at Sherman Park. While Coach Chance would like to see the team win a couple of games, the focus remains on applying what has been learned throughout the season.

"We're hoping to go up and be competitive," he said. "We want them to take everything they've learned, apply it to the tournament and have a good tournament."

Fury Wildcats

The Fury Wildcats (12-12) have come together well in their first year of competition.

"The whole team has come a long ways," said coach Jim Reinhardt. "I am proud of how the team has played."

Hailey Lande, Ella Mulder and Jordyn Salvatori have shared pitching duties, with each playing in the infield when not in the circle. Lainie Keller and Emily Reinhardt have both caught and played in the infield. Caitlin Berndt, Alley Lande, Piper Leidal, Keyara Mason and Addison Sedlacek have all played in the outfield. Emma Sedlacek has played both second and third base.

"We have made very few errors," Coach Reinhardt said. "They don't get forced into throwing the ball around."

The Fury Wildcats open against the Brandon Fire today at 11 a.m.

"I want to see them play well and have fun," Reinhardt said.

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Chicago Panel Approves Wrigley Field Upgrade

CHICAGO (AP) — Wrigley Field took a step in the direction of every major league ballpark in the country on Thursday when a city commission unanimously approved the Chicago Cubs' massive renovation project that includes a Jumbotron and six other electronic signs.

The city's landmarks commission, which must sign off on such plans because Wrigley is so well known, agreed to a renovation project that is dramatically bigger than one approved last year. Besides the Jumbotron above the ivy-covered

outfield left field wall and another electronic sign above the right field wall that it already approved, the commission agreed to the Cubs' request to add five more electronic signs, expand the bleachers and build bullpens beneath the bleachers.

The vote came after a four-hour meeting during which the Cubs and the owners of the rooftop venues across the street engaged in an argument that has become familiar to Chicago over the past few years.

On one side, the Cubs said they

need the revenue generated by the signs to help fund the \$500 million project and ultimately generate enough money to help the team win its first World Series since 1908.

On the other were the owners of the rooftops, who say the signs violate a contract they have with the Cubs that calls for them to pay the team 17 percent of their gross revenues, because the signs would cut into the views of the field they need to survive.

The Cubs, which won approval

last year from the commission and later the City Council for a less-extensive expansion project, say they came forward with the new proposal only because the rooftop owners would not rule out filing a lawsuit.

"We learned ... the threat of litigation was very real, so we felt if we were going to get sued over two signs, that we felt we were within our rights to proceed with the original proposal," team spokesman Julian Green said before Thursday's

meeting.

Both sides believe they are on solid legal ground. The rooftop owners say what the Cubs are proposing is a clear violation of the contract because it directly hurts their business. The Cubs counter that while the team does not have the right to put up a fence designed only to block the views of the rooftops — something previous owners did briefly in 2002 — they can make city-approved improvements to the 100-year-old stadium.

Baseball: Tappers Power Past Irene; Menno, Crofton Win



JEREMY HOECK/P&D

Irene second baseman Adam Gale, left, shows the ball to the umpire after Yankton's Mike Janish steals second during their South Central League amateur game Thursday night in Irene.

IRENE — Mike Janish singled five times and the Yankton Tappers scored seven runs in the top of the ninth to roll past Irene 15-3 in South Central League action Thursday night in Irene.

Dave Schmidt, Jared Miller and Trey Krier all had three hits for Yankton (9-5), which led 15-1 midway through the ninth inning.

Krier pitched seven innings for the Tappers.

In the loss for the Cardinals (9-6), Simon Healy doubled and singled, Brett Jensen singled twice, and Andrew Hora took the loss.

On Sunday night, Yankton visits Avon and Irene visits Wynot.

YANKTON (9-5).....102 110 127 — 15 17 1
IRENE (9-6).....000 001 002 — 3 8 2
Trey Krier, Jason Miller (8), Kaleb Bromley (9) and Kory Bromley, Andrew Hora, Jack Huether (9) and Sam Parkinson

Menno 8, Wynot 4

MENNO — The Menno Mad Frogs jumped out to an 8-1 lead and held on for an 8-4 victory over Wynot in South Central League amateur baseball action on Thursday.

Tyler Miller doubled and singled, and Ben Fischer and Dylan Lehr each had two hits for Menno. Josh Berndt added a double for the Mad Frogs.

For Wynot, Lance Heine had three hits, including a home run. Scott Heimes and Lee Heimes each had two hits.

Doug Hall picked up the win. Scott Morrison took the loss.

Menno, now 6-9 in SCL, play, hosts Crofton on Sunday. Wynot hosts Irene on Sunday.

WYNOT.....010 000 030 — 4 9 2
MENNO.....120 200 30X — 8 10 2
Scott Morrison, Lee Heimes (7) and Kyle Wespener; Doug Hall, Macon Oplinger (8) and Jay Thaler

Crofton 7, Tabor 1

TABOR — Carl Schieffer had three hits and Nick Hegge homered as Crofton downed Tabor 7-1 in South Central League amateur baseball action on Thursday.

Rand Thygeson doubled and singled, and Tyler Zimmerman had two hits in the victory.

Chris Sutera had two of Tabor's six hits.

Seth Erdmann picked up the victory. Doug Vanecek took the loss.

Crofton travels to Menno on Sunday. Tabor hosts Scotland in a doubleheader Sunday, beginning at 4:30 p.m.

CROFTON.....013 001 011 — 7 8 1
TABOR.....000 000 100 — 1 6 3
Seth Erdmann, Rand Thygeson (8) and Carl Schieffer; Doug Vanecek, Jon Vavruska (4) and Wes Kloucek