

Area Teams Set For State B Legion Tourney

Tabor Hopes Pitching Leads To Deep Run

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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A year ago a young Tabor Post 183 team lost its opening game of the state tournament, then ran off three straight wins to get back to the championship game of the South Dakota State Class B American Legion Baseball Tournament.

Now, with several members of that team back and with a number of players who had success at the VFW Teener level, Tabor looks to make another deep tournament run.

Tabor opens play against Humboldt today (Friday) at 5 p.m. in Salem as the 2015 state tournament begins.

As they did at state a year ago, Tabor had to survive a first-round loss in Region 4B play. What helped the team qualify for state for the fourth time in five years was strong pitching depth, according to head coach Gary Kortan.

"In a five-game, maybe a six-game tournament, we have the luxury of being able to mix and match," he said. "Chase (Kortan, 5-0, 31K) and Hunter Young (2-0) are hard throwers. The others, we expect them to throw strikes and we play defense behind them."

Cole Uecker (2-4, 1 save), Carter Mecham (1-0), Bryce Scieszinski (1-1), Sawyer Schmitz (0-1) and Mace Merkwan (0-0, 1 save) have all been contributors on the mound. Others have pitched for Tabor as well.

Offense has also been a key for Tabor, which has averaged 9.4 runs per game and batted .321 as a team.

Chase Kortan, the team's leadoff hitter, is batting .479 with 15 extra-base hits, 14 stolen bases and 25 RBI. Alex Caba (.355, 17 RBI, 7 SB), Uecker (.312, 18 RBI), Zach Sutera (.315, 11 RBI),



P&D FILE PHOTO
Cole Uecker and his Tabor teammates begin play today (Friday) at the S.D. State Class B American Legion Baseball Tournament in Salem.

TABOR | PAGE 7A

Motivated Vermillion Ready

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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With a trip to state just one victory away, Vermillion Post 1 saw that goal derailed in the 2014 Region 3B championship.

This season, Post 1 was not going to let that happen. And with the berth in the 2015 South Dakota Class B American Legion Baseball Tournament secured, Vermillion is determined to make the run they felt they could have made last season.

Vermillion takes a 15-14 record into state, which begins today (Friday) in Salem.

"For our core group, that was tough," Vermillion head coach Jason Gault said of missing state in 2014. "We thought we had a group that could play for a state championship. Our seniors have had a bad taste in their mouths for a year now."

That setback has helped Post 1 focus this season, said Ethan James.

"We feel like we've zeroed in as a team as regions approached," he said. "We knew it was all or nothing. We'll do the same thing at state."

James (4-1, 2.28 ERA, 27 K in 30 2/3 IP) is one of five pitchers who has recorded over 20 innings on the season, led by Jake Odens (2-3, 1 save, 4.35 ERA, 34 IP). Hunter Christopherson (3-2, 2.94 ERA, 18 K in 31 IP), Carter Kratz (2-2, 2 saves, 1.71 ERA, 27 K in 28 2/3 IP) and Cole Anderson (3-1, 2.86 ERA, 16 K in 22 IP) have also been regulars on the mound, each recording between five and nine appearances.

Gault said the five main pitchers are fairly even.

"I would hate to name a number one," he said. "We have five that can go out and locate. We don't have guys that can blow it by batters."

Anderson (7 doubles, 14 RBI, 22 runs) is batting

VERM | PAGE 7A

Hoeck: Can The MVFC Repeat 2014 Success?

BY JEREMY HOECK
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It's a blessing in disguise. You put together such a successful, history-making season that expectations of you are suddenly sky-high (can you do it again?), and yet, your profile is raised because of that same success.

That's the exact situation the Missouri Valley Football Conference finds itself in heading into the 2015 season.



Jeremy
HOECK

How could the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) league possibly repeat its performances from last year? You'll remember, five conference teams earned a spot in the playoffs, and for the first time, two teams from the same league – North Dakota State and Illinois State – met for the championship.

That's a lot to defend for 2015. As the MVFC prepares to unveil its pre-season poll and teams next Monday, there is no shortage of key storylines heading into the fall.

Among them: Can North Dakota State make it five FCS titles in a row?

Can the Valley repeat its non-conference success from 2014?

How will Bo Pelini fare in his first season at Youngstown State?

Will South Dakota climb out of the cellar?

Before any of those post-season or league game questions can be answered, the most intriguing issue – in my opinion, at least – is how the Valley will fare in the non-conference season. That's the time when the conference can really make some noise nationally, when league teams are pitted against FBS teams and top-25 teams within the FCS.

A year ago, Valley teams went 35-12 in the non-conference, and an astounding 30-2 against FCS peers – the only losses coming from South Dakota at Montana, and Illinois State in the title game.

Can the Valley do it again? A survey of every team's non-conference schedule (3 games, 8 league games) certainly gives you the impression that yes, the Valley is primed for another gaudy record.

Out of the 27 non-conference games against FCS teams, five will be played against FCS playoff participants from a year ago: Morgan State (vs. Illinois State), Montana (NDSU), Eastern Washington (Northern Iowa), Liberty (Southern Illinois) and Coastal Carolina (Western Illinois). Seven of those 27 non-conference games will be played against teams that had a

HOECK | PAGE 7A

Region 2A Grand Slam



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D
Yankton's Levi Schmidt, center, is greeted at home plate after hitting a grand slam during the championship of the Region 2A American Legion Baseball Tournament on Thursday in Vallen Springs. Sioux Falls West rallied for a 9-7 victory to win the title, but both teams qualify for state.

West Edges Post 12 For Title



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/P&D
Yankton right fielder Tyler Guthmiller makes a diving catch during the Region 2A American Legion baseball tournament championship game on Thursday in Valley Springs. Sioux Falls West won 9-7 to take the title, but both teams advance to state.

BY MICHAEL HAMMOND
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VALLEY SPRINGS – Sioux Falls West Post 15 defeated Yankton Post 12, 9-7, in a close ballgame throughout to win the Region 2A American Legion Baseball Tournament on Thursday in Valley Springs.

The runs started crossing home plate early as Sioux Falls West's Justin Kautz hit an RBI-triple to the right field fence in the top of the first and went on to score after Sam Lang stole second base. Yankton's Mason Townsend responded in the bottom of the inning with a two-run double before being stranded on third to end the inning.

Scoring picked up again in the top of the third for Sioux Falls West from a RBI-double from Lang, a bases loaded hit-by-pitch that scored Chandler Austin, and a sacrifice fly from Charley Ilig to put West on top, 5-2. In the bottom of the inning Levi Schmidt hit a grand slam home run to put Yankton in the lead for the first time at, 6-5.

"That ball probably

doesn't get out at most parks, but it got out today and that gave us a huge energy boost," Yankton coach Trey Krier said. "He was able to find a way to get the ball up into the Jetstream and you could sense that our guys got a little more pep in their step for a little bit."

During the top of the fifth inning Kautz was able to lead off with a solo home run to tie the game up at six apiece.

It wasn't until the top of the eighth when, Ryan Benson hit a one-run single that the tie was broken. Yankton was able to get an RBI-walk from Colin Muth with the bases loaded in the bottom of the inning to knot the game at seven going into the ninth.

West wasted no time in the top of the ninth scoring on a single from Tyler Wildes who also scored on a bases loaded fielder's choice to put them up by two.

"I wasn't really thinking about it too much," Wildes said. "I was just trying to get the ball out of the infield."

POST 12 | PAGE 7A

Baseball: Reds Split Home DH



JEREMY HOECK/P&D
Yankton Reds batter Chris Steffen fouls off a pitch during Thursday's VFW Teener doubleheader against Brookings at Bob Tereshinski Stadium at Riverside Field.

The Yankton Reds split a VFW Teener baseball doubleheader with Brookings on Thursday at Bob Tereshinski Stadium at Riverside Field. Brookings won the opener 5-4 and Yankton won the nightcap 6-3.

In game one, Matthew Mors and Princeton Vollmer each went 2-3 for Yankton, while Ryan Eihacker had an RBI double and Christian Curran added an RBI single. Andy Knapp and Chris Steffen both chipped in with a single.

Steffen allowed five earned runs to take the loss. In game two, Vollmer was 3-3 and Knapp went 2-2 with three RBI for Yankton. Mors had an RBI single, and Cayden Peterson, Wil Pease and Steffen all had one hit.

Nick Lindsey pitched the

first four innings to get the win, and Mors got the save in three innings of relief with five strikeouts.

S.F. East 16, Lakers 12

SIOUX FALLS – Sioux Falls East handed the Yankton Lakers their first loss, 16-12, in their VFW Teener baseball region tournament on Thursday in Sioux Falls.

Kieran Lullman had three hits, while Levi Wiersma and Michael Drotzmann each added two hits and two RBI for Yankton, which is now 1-1 in the tournament. Rex Ryken, Owen Feser and Sam Mooney both chipped in with a pair of hits, while Ethan Wishon and Peyton Mueller both had one hit.

The Lakers conclude the tournament today (Friday) at 4 p.m. against the Brandon Valley Thundercats and at 6:30 p.m. against Sioux Falls West.

Qualifiers will advance to the South Dakota State VFW Teener Class AA 13-14 Majors Tournament on July 31-Aug. 2 in Watertown.

Amateurs: District 6B Crofton 25, Scotland 0

IRENE – Top-seeded Crofton erupted for 25 runs in a 25-0 victory over Scotland in the first round Thursday of the District 6B Amateur Baseball Tournament in Irene.

No other information was reported. Scotland will play the loser of Wynot and Irene on Sunday at 5 p.m. Crofton will play next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

District 7B

Harrisburg 2, Canton 0

CANTON – Kyle Roozeboom hit a two-run home run in the top of the eighth inning and two pitchers combined on a shutout as Harrisburg beat Canton 2-0 on Wednesday in the first round of the District 7B Amateur Tournament.

Dalton Allan pitched eight scoreless innings and John Spaeth went the ninth

BASEBALL | PAGE 7A