

# Baseball

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abrupt change, Ranek said. "We got slid back a couple of years," he said. "Webster was supposed to have it in 2012, but a windstorm took down the lights. The fact that it was already June when it happened, (the state Legion) moved the tournament to Milbank. Out of respect, they then gave it back to Webster in 2013, so we got moved back a year."

The baseball action may take place on Leonard Cimpl Field, but the real work of hosting the tournament takes place behind the scenes.

"Volunteers will be the key to making the tournament successful," he said. "We need people to help with parking, clean-up, ticket taking, the concession stand and taking care of the field."

Susan Shrader, commander of Kortan-Hatwan Post 183, has been organizing the effort with the assistance of vice commander Julie Burbach. Shrader quickly points out it's more than a one- or two-person show.

"At our first meeting (last December), I was really blown away," she said. "The Chamber, town board, Legion and Auxiliary, and the Tabor Legion coaches were all at the meeting, asking how they could help. And St. Wenceslaus (Catholic Church) has also been really active. If it wasn't for the church, I'm not sure how we would host the tournament."

### A TEAM EFFORT

The baseball tournament comes in the midst of an extremely busy summer and fall, Shrader said. Czech Days will bring thousands of visitors to Tabor June 19-21.

Then comes the state baseball tourney, followed by Tabor hosting an overnight stop for the wagon train from Yankton to Pierre in September as part of South Dakota's 125th anniversary celebration.

The state Legion tournament may be held in Tabor, but other communities are making it a regional event, Shrader said.

"We have put together a joint effort with the Tyndall, Tabor, Springfield and Yankton communities all involved with this," she said. "All of our (tournament) teams stay in Yankton, and Yankton has been very good about supporting us."

Tournament organizers are using the region's unique features in hosting visitors, Shrader said. The Cogan House, an area lodge, will house the commissioners and umpires. This log cabin style lodge offers room for 12 with panoramic views of the Lewis and Clark Lake on the Missouri River.

The Missouri River and campgrounds will also provide a draw for those who want to camp during their stay.

The Yankton motels and restaurants will play a key role in accommodating the large number of fans, Shrader said. With an archery tournament also in Yankton that weekend, Mount Marty College has offered dorm rooms if needed, she added.

Besides its coverage of the tournament, the Press & Dakotan will shoot photos of the tourney action and post the pictures on its "Spotted" site at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net), Shrader said.

Yankton will also play a major role in providing entertainment and activities for players, coaches and fans, Ranek said.

"The teams only play one game a day. If they play at 11 a.m., they will be done at 2 p.m. What do they do from 2 p.m. to 10 o'clock at night?" he asked. "They're not going to stay at the ballpark and watch all of those games. There will be activities for them at Yankton if they want to do things like play miniature golf, do car trax, go bowling, visit the paintball barn or go fishing or boating. There will be things they can partake in."

Tabor plans to draw upon Yankton's experience with major events, Ranek said. "Yankton has been a great host for many activities, and they will help us with this one, too," he said.

The entire region has also stepped forward to help cover the tournament costs that need to be paid up front.

Shrader has budgeted \$10,000 for tournament expenses, such as housing the commissioners, paying the umpires, purchasing the trophies and providing the baseballs. In addition, the Tabor organizers want to provide the championship and runner-up teams with individual medals.

In turn, Tabor residents and the area communities have responded with donations, advertisements and sponsorships.

One of the major fundraisers is a raffle, with proceeds

split between the Legion tournament and the Springfield Veterans Memorial. Connie Allen chairs the Springfield monument committee, with the memorial scheduled for completion by Veterans Day 2016.

Tickets will be sold at Czech Days in Tabor, Tyndall Hot Dog Days and the July 4 celebration in Springfield. The winners need not be present for the drawing on the final day of the state Legion tournament.

The prizes include a basketball signed by U.S. Sen. John Thune, a baseball bat signed by Jason Kubel of the Minnesota Twins, a commemorative coin and a day-long fishing trip with master bass fisherman Lewis Bailey

of Tyndall.

### FIELD OF DREAMS

When the opening pitch is thrown for the State B tournament, Ranek believes the teams, coaches and fans will be impressed with what they find at Leonard Cimpl Field.

"The community of Tabor is very proud of its baseball team, and they do a really good job with the stadium," he said. "They're making improvements with the grandstands, and they continue to do improvements with the field. They are buying equipment and replacing the lighting."

And when it comes to the Tabor team, Ranek and assistants Robert Ulmer and

Jordan Kortan plan to be ready for action.

While an automatic qualifier, Ranek emphasized his squad won't merely show up for its games. Tabor reached last year's state tournament and narrowly missed the championship game.

"Last year, we had a good team. This year, we are trying to reload. We expect to definitely (make our presence felt) at the state tournament," he said. "One of the questions (of the state Legion selection committee) was, 'Will you be a good host team and be competitive?' They didn't want the host team to lose games like 22-0."

Ironically, the Tabor baseball team faces one disadvantage as the host team,

Ranek said.

"We win an automatic berth, which is good. But it's also odd that we are now scrambling for games," he said. "If you host the state tournament, you aren't part of the region (play-offs). We have about 10 days where we don't play and are just sitting it out. During that time, we hope to play teams from Nebraska or Iowa that are close to us. But it's also close to their tournament time. We hope to pick up a couple of games, but we'll have to wait and see when the time comes."

Tabor can't control one aspect of hosting the tournament — the teams that qualify. Shrader and Ranek agree that fan attendance will receive a huge boost if the field includes

a number of area teams that draw large crowds. However, they are also hoping to attract a large number of area fans who just want to see some of the state's best baseball players.

The assistance coming from the entire region will ensure the state tournament becomes a success, Shrader said.

"This (tourney) is a big thing for us to do," she said. "At first, I was scared, but with all the help we have received, now I'm really confident we can pull it off."

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at [twitter.com/RDockendorf](http://twitter.com/RDockendorf). Discuss this story at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net).

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