

Yankton Tappers

Coming off Yankton's first state tournament berth since 2005, the Yankton Tappers return nearly everyone from a team that won the 2009 South Central League regular season title.

Everyone plus two significant additions.

The Tappers, who found success last year from Mount Marty College players, have added former Menno Mad Frogs standouts Trey Krier (P/IF) and Robb McClemans (OF). The duo, both former MMC products, will only bolster a team that was among the league leaders in pitching and hitting in 2009.

"We're very optimistic with the group we have coming back," manager Ron Heine said. "Mount Marty has had an excellent season, and I anticipate that will translate into our amateur season. We'll try to do what we did last year."

However, with Mount Marty's season continuing into the NAIA National Tournament, the Tappers will be short-handed at the onset. Yet, Heine said the team's SCL opener against Wynot might be postponed.

Yankton will boast a pitching staff that includes Krier, Mike Hammonds (P/IF), Nick Huston (P), Rand Thygeson (P/OF), Jake Broscha (P) and Mark Vig (P/IF). Last year's mid-season addition Layne Somsen, a member of the South Dakota State baseball team, is recovering from an injury and will not play in 2010.

Also playing for the Tappers this season will be Zach Lambrechts (OF), Andy Turbak (OF), Ross Heine (C), Kyle Nickolite (IF), as well as Eric Dawson, Nick Dawson and potentially Kyle Smith.

"We'll have pretty good team speed again, and I think we'll be able to stay with teams because of our offense," Ron Heine said. "We have a lot of guys back who have experience in this league."

Though the Tappers are the defending league champions, Heine said he believes the familiar names will once again contend in 2010.

"Crofton and Wynot should be two of the better teams again," Heine said. "It's always going to be stiff competition in this league."

Crofton Bluejays

Last year was sort of a bitter-sweet year for the Crofton.

Even though the Bluejays finished with a 14-4 record, which was good for second in the South Central League, Crofton was ousted in the first round.

"Everything went real well; we just stumbled when we got to the state tournament," manager Carl Schieffer said.

The successful year didn't help Crofton gain more player seither as the Bluejays only have 12 players on their roster this year.

But Schieffer said he isn't worried about having a somewhat pared down team this year.

"The numbers are down, but the core of the group is still there yet," Schieffer said. "I feel we are as strong as we have been the past couple of seasons."

One of the biggest reasons Schieffer is looking forward to another successful year for Crofton is the team's pitching.

Last year the Bluejays allowed just 63 runs which averaged out to only 3.5 runs per game — easily the lowest total in the SCL since Crofton was the only team which allowed fewer than 100 runs on the year.

Every main pitcher is back from last year's staff, led by Mike Sturm and Bill Guenther.

The other pitchers who will see time are Nick Hegge, Logan



YANKTON: Nick Huston

Foxhoven, Scott Donner, Aaron Losing and Tyler Zimmerman.

"We have quite a bit of pitching depth," Schieffer said. "Some of the guys that I have had have been real strong and I am fortunate to have them stick around for us to build off them. Plus, it seems like a lot of the kids who we bring up every year seem to work in our favor."

Crofton wasn't just a one trick pony either.

The Bluejays can pitch, but they can also hit.

Last year, Crofton averaged nine runs a game, which is a good amount considering the Bluejays excellent season on the mound.

When Losing, Hegge and Foxhoven aren't pitching, they round out the team's outfield.

Joe Wiebelhaus will also see

time in right field, but will play first base, as will Bill Guenther when he isn't pitching.

Chad Guenther will play third base and Tony Guenther can play either shortstop or second base.

Schieffer will be the team's primary catcher with Gary Redden able to play second base and catcher.

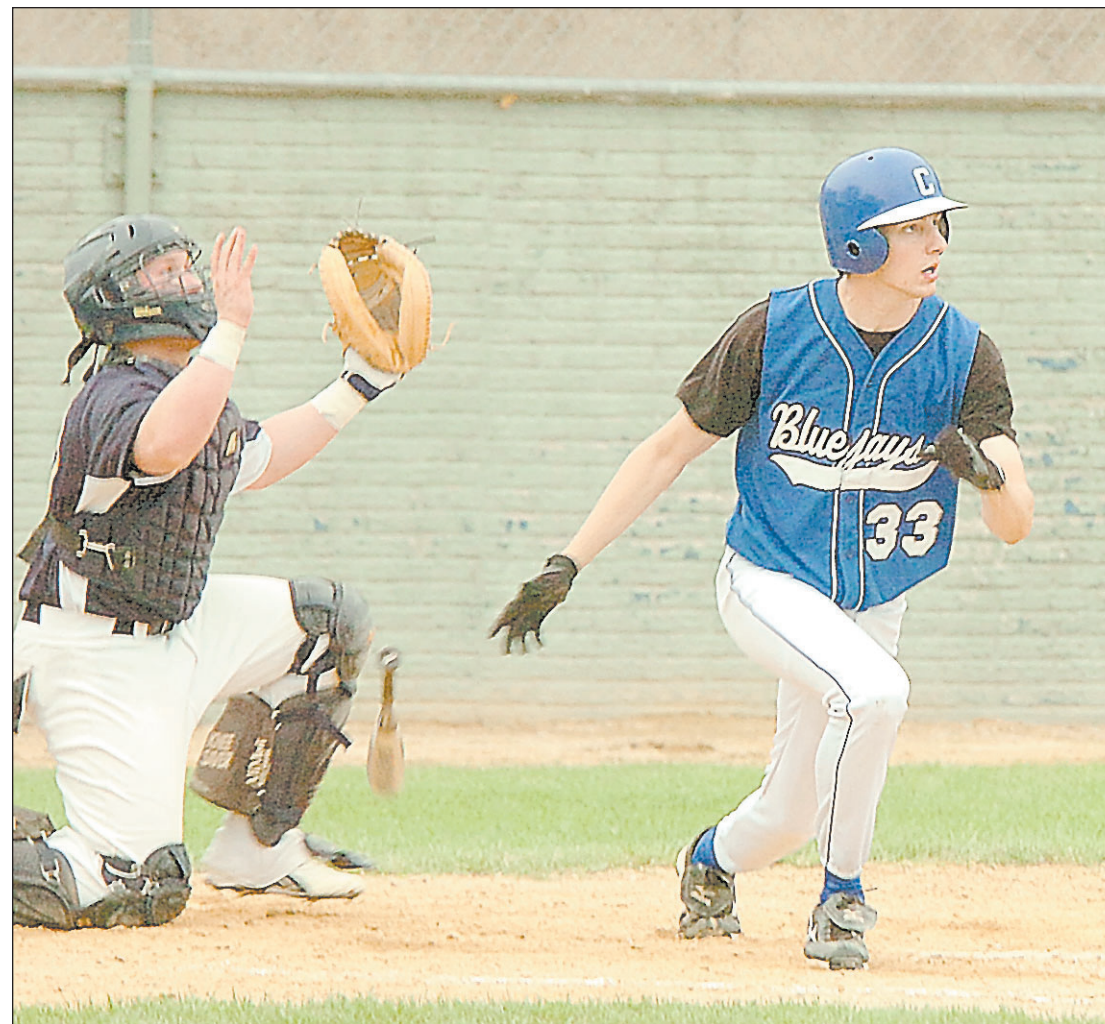
Scott Donner will see time at shortstop.

Tyler Zimmerman will also see time in the outfield.

Freeman Black Sox

If the Freeman Black Sox had their way, the state tournament would be held in Mitchell every year.

This year, the tournament will be in Sioux Falls which hasn't



CROFTON: Nick Hegge (33)

played to the Black Sox favor in the past.

The last two times the tournament was held in Sioux Falls, the Black Sox have failed to qualify for the state tournament.

But even with the state tournament in Mitchell last year, the Black Sox fell one game sort of qualified.

Manager Eric Hortness said those two factors alone should be enough to motivate the team this year.

"If you compound not making it the past year along with the tournament being in Sioux Falls, really want to make it," he said. "Everyone on the team this year knows how bad we want to make it, and has worked hard to get that goal."

Last year, Freeman finished with an 8-10 record, but Hortness said the focus is to make the state tournament more than how good the team's record can be.

"It's always nice to finish high

in the league for a better seed, but overall record doesn't mean a whole lot to me since everyone makes the playoffs," he said. "It only takes one good week to make the state tournament no matter what your record is."

If Freeman wants to have the chance to have that one good week to make it to Sioux Falls, the team's pitching will have to be better than it was last year.

The Black Sox were dealt a blow early in the season last year when Jay Kirsch went down with an injury after only pitching 16 innings.

Kirsch was expected to be one of the main pitchers, but the Black Sox had to turn elsewhere. Hortness led the team with a 3.21 ERA in 56 innings pitched.

But there was a considerable drop-off after Hortness. Austin Smidt had the next lowest ERA of 6.90 in 30 innings.

The Black Sox are hoping to bounce back on the mound this year after adding the 2002 South Dakota high school player of the year Michael Bertram (Winner).

Freeman will also get Kirsch back from shoulder surgery and Hortness expects him along with Bertram to be the team's top two starters.

Hitting wasn't a problem for Freeman as the Black Sox hit .333 as a team last year.

However, the Black Sox will have to replace one of their best hitters.

Tyler Gillen's career is possibly over after he underwent emergency surgery to remove a brain aneurysm.

Hortness said Gillen's loss will hurt, but he still expects him to be a presence in the Black Sox dugout in the games he attends this year.

To fill the void left by Gillen, the Black Sox picked up Jim McNaughton to play third base.

The core of the line-up returns, led by Garrett Gross (IF) led the team in home runs (four) and RBIs (26) to go along with a .479 batting average.

Also back is Brett

■ SCL 2010, Page 3 please



YANKTON: Zach Lambrechts (left)

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