

AMATEUR BASEBALL | SOUTH CENTRAL LEAGUE PREVIEW



JAMES D. CIMBUREK/THE P&D

Matt Yost, left, Dan Bures and Joe Sees stand in front of the Avon sign in right field at the town's ballpark. Amateur baseball and the South Central League return to Avon for the first time since 1993 when the

Bards take to the field tonight against Freeman. Avon brings the league total back to 10 teams. SCL play begins tonight and runs through July 17.

A Look At The South Central League Teams

Here is a look at the other nine teams in the South Central League. Yankton is listed first, with other teams listed in alphabetical order.

Yankton Tappers

Traditionally boasting a number of current and former college players, the Yankton Tappers will see an even greater amount this summer.

2010 Standings	W	L
Yankton	12	4
Tabor	11	5
Freeman	11	5
Irene	10	6
Crofton	10	6
Menno	4	12
Lesterville	3	13
Scotland	0	16

The Tappers, which is the only team in the SCL to compete in Class A, returns the core from last year's

squad that finished 13-8 and lost in an elimination game in the State Class A Tournament.

And adding to an already stacked roster, manager Ron Heine and his coaching staff will have current Mount Marty College baseball players Mathias Godsil, Brock Thomas, Jared Miller, Derrik Nelson, Jason Livermont, Adam McVay and Brian Bartlett this summer.

"It's a very good group that should be able to mix well together," Heine said. "Everybody for the most part has played with each other enough to know how to get it done."

Also back for the Tappers are Trey Krier (who threw a no-hitter in the state tournament last year), Jake Broscha, Zach Lambrechts, Andy Turbak, Ross Heine, Rand Thygeson, Jesse Bailey, Robb McClemons, Kyle Nickolite and Mark Vig.

To that end, Ron Heine joked that his job as manager is one of the toughest in the state.

"The hardest thing I have to do is put together a lineup with all these good players," said Heine, who mentioned that the Tappers will add extra games this summer so all the players can see equal time.

The Tappers have also added veteran players Jason Nelson and Mark Ryken, which Heine said will give a fairly young team additional leadership and baseball experience.

Yankton's pitching will again be a strength, as it will have Krier,



Yankton's Robb McClemons

Broscha, Bartlett, McVay, Bailey, Thygeson and potentially others see time on the mound.

Heine said he believes the SCL will even more competitive this summer with the addition of the Avon Bards to the league.

Crofton Bluejays

After finishing the regular season as the sixth team in the South Central League standings, the Bluejays put together a memorable finish to the 2010 season.

Crofton qualified for the Class B State Tournament and advanced all the way to the championship game, eventually losing to Dimock-Emerly 6-4.

And now, with 11 key returners for this summer, the Bluejays are looking for similar success.

"It's definitely a big thing for us to have all the same guys back. We've got everything intact," manager Carl Schieffer said. "I feel strongly about our team, and we've even added some good, young players. I think we'll be tough with what we have."

Crofton brings back Aaron Losing (OF/P), Nick Hegge (OF/P), Kyle Mueller (OF), Chad Guenther (IF), Scot Donner (IF/P), Tony Guenther (IF), Joe Wiebelhaus (IF/OF), Mike Sturm (P/IF), Bill Guenther (P/IF), Tyler Zimmerman (OF/P) and Schieffer (C).

The Bluejays will also benefit from five additional players from the other Crofton amateur team,

Avon Returns To The SCL

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AVON — It had been 18 years since an amateur baseball team last took the field in Avon, but this spring baseball is back.

The Avon Bards make their South Central League debut tonight (Thursday) against Freeman, the first of an 18-game league schedule.

Avon has not had an amateur baseball team since the Mets folded after the 1993 season. Last summer, baseball players from the Avon area started tossing around the idea of getting a team back in Avon.

"We started throwing the idea around, started throwing out names of people that were around and we thought could play," said Matt Yost, one of the team's co-managers. "We talked to some of the old Avon Mets, and they were very supportive of seeing a team in town again."

Organizers wanted to have a certain number of players committed to the team before they made a move.

"We set our magic number of 12," Yost said. "If we got 12 guys committed, we'd make a go of it."

The group wanted to pick a team name that tied into Avon's past.

"Until the 1940s, Avon High School teams used to be the 'Bards,' as a reference to Shakespeare, a bard that hailed from Avon," Yost noted. A "bard" is a poet, with Shakespeare — who was born and raised in Stratford-upon-Avon and was called the "Bard of Avon" — considered by many as one of the greatest

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MATT YOST

poets of all time. "When we got together, we wanted to pick a name that captured the mystique of Avon."

But once the Bards were accepted into the SCL, the team got a boost.

"As soon as the South Central League accepted our bid, we had a lot of guys change their summer plans to make a go of it."

Most of the team's 22 players, including Yost, the Avon High School principal, and SCL veteran Joe Sees, who currently lives in Avon, have ties to the Avon area. Unlike Sees, though, the majority of the team does not have amateur baseball experience.

"A lot of these guys haven't played in a while," Yost noted. "We're trying to find a fit where they are most comfortable."

Sees, Logan Tycz and Josh Wagner will get the majority of the starts on the mound, with veteran Matt Eggers also seeing some time.

Yost, Sees, Tycz and Wagner will also see time in the infield, as will Jeff Haenfler, Drew Dykstra, Marshall Cihak, Dwight Brandt, Justin Lukkes, Matt Tjeerdsma, James Tjeerdsma, Andy Kok and catcher Dan Bures.

Nick Tadlock, an all-conference selection for the Dakota Wesleyan baseball team, leads a strong contingent of athletes in the outfield, including Jesse Hajek, Danny Fathke, Paul Van Gerpen, Trace Tjeerdsma, Matt Dykstra, Gary Frank and Nathan Schultz.

Besides getting a solid number of individuals who wanted to wear a Bards uniform, the team has had good support around town.

"The community has been extremely supportive," Yost said. "We've had a number of community donations. The city has helped get the field ready. The athletic roots in Avon are strong. Any time you get a new activity, a new sport going, they're going to get behind it."

While Yost isn't expecting a league title in the team's first year, he'd like to see the team start off strong.

"We want to be competitive," he said. "If we are successful early, the community and the league will buy into our squad, which hopefully is something we can build on for the future."

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