

# SCL

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## Irene Cardinals

Following a first-round exit in last year's state tournament, the Cardinals bring back essentially the same nucleus in an attempt to go at least one step further in 2012.

"Winning the district, that's what we shoot for every year," manager Kendall Johnke said. "Crofton will be tough to compete with, just like Wynot and Tabor. Whatever team is playing better ball and makes fewer mistakes will probably come out on top."

Irene, 13-5 in the SCL last summer, brings back regulars George Sees (OF/P), Matt Sees (IF/P), Simon Healy (IF/P), Mike King (IF/P), Jeremy Rempp (C/IB/OF), Matt Rempp (IF/P), Adam Gale (IF), Wes Robertson (1B/RF), Ben Sees (IF/OF/P), Brett Mellem (OF) and Brian Drapeaux (OF/P).

Among the new faces expected to see significant action are Josh Nielsen (IF), Daschle Larsen (IF/OF/P) and former Mount Marty College catcher Josh Wenande (C/IF/OF).

"We lost Chase Hetland, our leadoff hitter, so our new guys will have to step in and fill that spot for us," Johnke said. "Jeremy, who has been our main catcher, had some arm trouble last year, but it looks like he's back at full strength."

With a depth pitching staff that will rely on Drapeaux, Matt Sees and Matt Rempp, the focus will be on defense with the new wood bats this season, Johnke said.

"Defense will be a huge key for us," he said. "You could have a few good innings and then turn around and make a few errors, and the game is totally different. It'll have to be more small ball and defense now."

## Lesterville Broncs

After a record of 0-17 in the SCL last season, the Lesterville Broncs have nowhere to go but up. At least that is the mindset that manager Kevin Bloch has entering the 2012 season.

"There's only one way to improve and that's to win one game," Bloch said, jokingly. "I think we are going to be considerably better. We picked up some guys and bring back some veteran players."

The list of newcomers for Lesterville includes several young, new faces that will bring some speed to the roster. The Broncs bring in Cody Ulmer, Jason Vaith, Jacob Bierle, Tyler Edler and Ian Powell.

"We got quite a few people back from last year but these guys should fall into starting rolls quickly," Bloch said.

The only loss to Lesterville's roster and its pitching strength is veteran Mike Pavel (P/OF) due to health issues.

A change to wood bats will also play a factor in the Broncs' hopes of improvement this season.

"The wood bats will hopefully even things out so we can compete with some teams better," Bloch said. "Our pitching might be a little down so we'll have to focus on throwing strikes and putting up enough runs to beat some teams."

Bloch believes that the same group of teams will come out on top this season but that the Broncs will be no push-overs.

"Crofton and Wynot are going to be pretty tough," Bloch said. "They're always competitive, but I think we are going to surprise some teams this year."



IRENE CARDINALS | BRIAN DRAPEAUX

# 2012 South Central League Season Schedule

<b>Sunday, May 20</b> Lesterville at Irene Menno at Crofton Scotland at Avon Wynot at Tabor Yankton at Freeman	<b>Friday, June 1</b> Lesterville at Tabor	Yankton at Crofton	Lesterville at Avon Menno at Freeman Yankton at Wynot	Menno at Tabor Wynot at Avon Yankton at Irene
<b>Thursday, May 24</b> Menno at Avon Tabor at Irene Yankton at Scotland	<b>Sunday, June 3</b> Avon at Wynot Irene at Yankton Lesterville at Crofton Scotland at Freeman Tabor at Menno	<b>Friday, June 15</b> Scotland at Lesterville	<b>Friday, June 29</b> Scotland at Tabor	<b>Tuesday, July 10</b> Avon at Freeman Irene at Wynot Lesterville at Menno Scotland at Crofton Yankton at Tabor
<b>Friday, May 25</b> Crofton at Freeman Wynot at Lesterville	<b>Thursday, June 7</b> Crofton at Scotland Freeman at Avon Tabor at Yankton Wynot at Irene	<b>Thursday, June 21</b> Avon at Scotland Crofton at Menno Freeman at Yankton Tabor at Wynot	<b>Sunday, July 1</b> Avon at Crofton Menno at Yankton Scotland at Irene Tabor at Freeman	<b>Thursday, July 12</b> Crofton at Yankton Freeman at Irene Lesterville at Scotland Menno at Wynot Tabor at Avon
<b>Sunday, May 27</b> Avon at Lesterville Crofton at Irene Freeman at Menno Tabor at Scotland Wynot at Yankton	<b>Friday, June 8</b> Menno at Lesterville	<b>Friday, June 22</b> Irene at Lesterville	<b>Wednesday, July 4</b> Lesterville at Yankton Scotland at Menno	<b>Sunday, July 15</b> Avon at Yankton Freeman at Lesterville Irene at Menno Tabor at Crofton Wynot at Scotland
<b>Thursday, May 31</b> Crofton at Avon Freeman at Wynot Irene at Scotland Yankton at Menno	<b>Sunday, June 10</b> Crofton at Tabor Lesterville at Freeman Menno at Irene Scotland at Wynot Yankton at Avon	<b>Sunday, June 24</b> Avon at Menno Freeman at Crofton Irene at Tabor Lesterville at Wynot Scotland at Yankton	<b>Thursday, July 5</b> Irene at Avon	<b>DISTRICT TOURN.</b> July 19-28 at Menno
	<b>Thursday, June 14</b> Avon at Tabor Irene at Freeman Wynot at Menno	<b>Thursday, June 28</b> Irene at Crofton	<b>Friday, July 6</b> Tabor at Lesterville Wynot at Crofton	<b>STATE TOURN.</b> Aug. 1-12 at Mitchell
			<b>Sunday, July 8</b> Crofton at Lesterville Freeman at Scotland	



TABOR BLUEBIRDS | JASON HUMPAL (RIGHT)

B.J. Wetherell (IF/P), Steve Cotton (OF), Bryan Fuks (IF/P), Dan Janssen (OF), Jordan Pravec (IF/P/C) and Kyle Mogck (IF/P).

On a team that manager Kronaizl estimates its average age between 24-25, the Highlanders have used an increased number of practices to get themselves ready.

"We hit the ball better at the end of last year, and hopefully that carries over," Kronaizl said. "We've had good practices so far, the guys have been spraying it all over the field."

Saying that he believes Wynot and Crofton will compete for the SCL title, Kronaizl said his team has goals to be somewhere in the middle of the pack.

"We're just hoping we're in the middle of the standings and at least compete at the district tournament," he said.

## Tabor Bluebirds

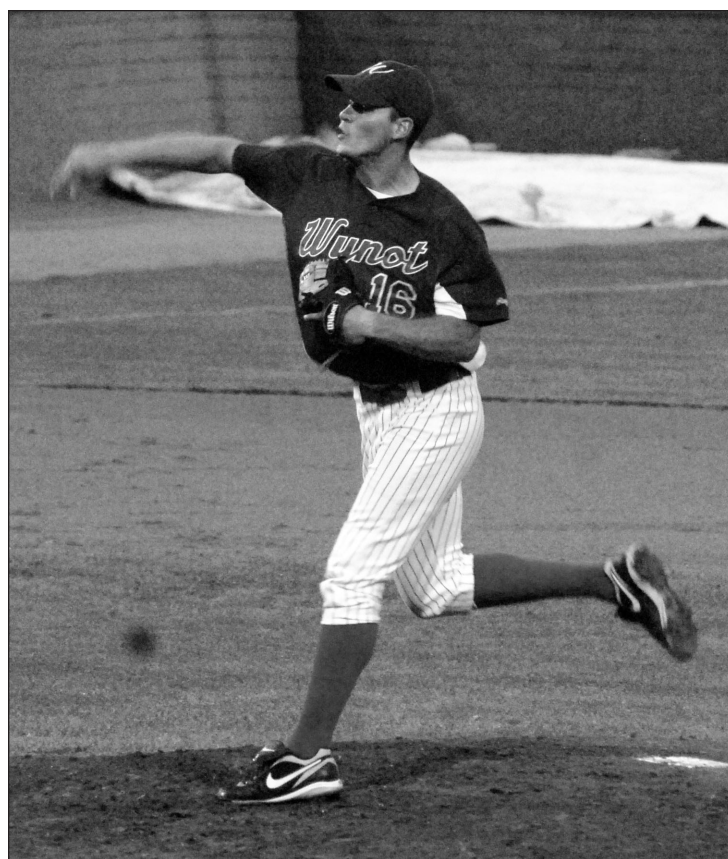
Perhaps the biggest change across the league will be in Tabor, which was 20-6 last summer, won the district tournament and lost to Crofton in the state championship game.

The Bluebirds will be without five regulars from that team; most of that accounting for a bulk of the team's speed.

"Our pitching should be near the top of the league again, but we'll probably need to figure out how to score a few more runs," manager Gary Kortan said. "We lost a lot of our speed, so we'll have to manufacture some runs other ways."

Tabor does however return its leading hitter, Cory Uecker (IF, .507), and its main home run threat, Steve Fefjar (C, 9 HR). Among the other starters back for the Bluebirds are Chris Sutura (OF/IF/P), Jason Humpal (IF) and Rob Keppen (IF/DH), while legion newcomer Wes Kloucek figures to be in the regular mix.

On the mound, Tabor will be without Dominic Wieseler, but returns veterans Jon Vavruska, Joe Vavruska and Kortan. Newcomer Doug Vanecek figures to fill in some of those innings the



WYNOT EXPOS | SCOTT MORRISON

a strength of ours."

The newcomers include Ben Fischer (IF), Jason Larson (IF), Will Massey (OF), Robert Schoenfish (OF) and Austin Herboldt (IF).

They will join returners Tate Bruckner (P/C), Macon Oplinger (OF/P), Tyler Miller (SS), Doug Hall (OF/P), Tom Sattler (IF/P), Tyson Haasz (OF), Spencer Neuhaert (OF) and Liebl (OF).

"We're not going to be a big power-hitting team, but we'll run the bases pretty aggressively," Guthmiller said.

Helping to motivate the Mad Frogs this season is the fact that the District 6B Tournament will be held in Menno from July 19-28.

Until then, it's just a matter of staying consistent, Guthmiller said.

"It'll be a little bit of a rebuilding year for us," he said. "I look for Crofton, Tabor and Wynot to be at the top of the league, with Irene not that far behind."

## Scotland Highlanders

One of the youngest teams in the South Central League, the Highlanders are looking to improve on last summer's 3-15 record.

"I expect us to be a little more competitive," manager Dennis Kronaizl said. "Using wood bats should help us a lot, because it gets the game moving quicker and they're lower scoring. I think we'll be a little better on the mound and in the field."

## Menno Mad Frogs

The Mad Frogs will be looking to rebound from last season's 5-13 record in the SCL. Menno came within one win of the state tournament under manager Ryan Liebl.

A group of five newcomers, including four from the American Legion ranks, should provide the Mad Frogs with the depth necessary to compete.

"We'll be pretty strong up the middle, and we have three or four really good control pitchers," assistant coach Galen Guthmiller said. "We've always been strong behind the plate, and centerfield has always been

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