

Amateur Baseball

SCL Season Begins Sunday

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The battle for the five bids to the 2014 state tournament begins this weekend for the 10 amateur baseball teams in the South Central League.

All 10 teams — Avon, Crofton, Freeman, Irene, Lesterville, Menno, Scotland, Tabor, Wynot and Yankton (Class A) — will be in action beginning Sunday night at 7:30 p.m.

The Crofton Bluejays, the 2011 state champions, won the District 6B title a year ago and return a majority of their roster for this summer.

Irene, Lesterville, Tabor and Wynot joined Crofton at the state tournament. All five South Central League teams won in the first round, but all five lost in the second round.

This summer, the District 6B Tournament will be held July 24-Aug. 2 in Freeman, with the Class B State Tournament set for Aug. 6-17 in Mitchell.

Yankton will compete in the District 6A Tournament, which hasn't announced its dates and location yet, and will look to qualify for the Class A State Tournament.

Here is a look at every team in the league, beginning with Yankton and the rest of the squads in alphabetical order.

Yankton Tappers

The lone Class A team in the South Central League is ready to make another run at its state tournament.

Yankton, 14-4 in the SCL last summer, returns the majority of its lineup and pitching staff, and added a few new pieces, according to manager Ross Heine.

Back for the Tappers this summer will be Jared Miller, Jason Miller, Trey Krier, Devin Gullikson, Jesse Bailey, Dave Schmidt, Mike Janish, Nik Davis, Heath Arens, Kory Bromley, Kyle Pekarek, Jake Broscha, Robb McClemons and Heine. Derrik Nelson may play on the weekends.

Yankton also added a group of newcomers, including Derek Blumenstock and Jon Hass from Mount Marty College, as well as Andrew Hummel, Zach Benjamin and Kaib Bromley.

"I think we'll have a pretty good lineup again, we should be able to put up some runs," Heine said.

If there's one area where the Tappers aren't as deep, it's pitching, Heine said. Many of the same faces will see the mound this summer.

The team will, though, boast Krier (who hurled a no-hitter a year ago), Bailey, Schmidt, Jason Miller, Broscha, as well as newcomers Haas and Benjamin.

"It will just depend on who we have for each game," Heine said. A few of Yankton's players will also coach various youth teams this summer.

A year ago, the Tappers came up short of qualifying for the State A Tournament, losing on the final day of the district tournament.

"I really thought we'd get to state, but it was one of those days where we couldn't get a lot of our guys. But Vermillion was really good," Heine said.

"Hopefully this year we can get there, because anything's possible once that happens."

Avon Bards

Fans to Avon games this summer will look around the diamond and see plenty of new faces.

According to manager and catcher Dan Bures, the Bards (7-11 last year) will return only five of the starting nine positions from last summer's final game.

"We're getting younger, which is always good; that's obviously a positive," Bures said. "We're going to be trying out some new guys pitching. Maybe some guys who hadn't been counted on in the past."

Avon returns Dan Bures, Jeff Sand, Jeff Tolisma, Nick Honke, Zac London, Logan Tycz, Joey Cuka and Joe Sees (on a part-time basis). Newcomers to the team include Josh Chak, Brett Kuca, Devin Tolisma, Logan Mudder, Dru Soukup and Bryce Soukup.

"We've got a couple tremendous athletes, but some haven't played ball since legions, so I guess there's a little something to prove at this level," Bures said.

Mudder and Dru Soukup are on the roster as American Legion players, but will both see plenty of action, their manager said.

The pitching staff, in particular, will see a shakeup this summer. Avon lost Nate Harrington and Sees (who could still play on occasion), who Bures estimated combined to throw 70 percent of the innings last summer.

"Tycz is a player who could pick up some of that pitching slack in 2014, Bures said — "He'll get that chance this year."



Crofton second baseman Alex Mueller, right, tries to make the turn on a double play as Tabor's Rob Keppen slides into second base during the District 6B championship game. Crofton will look to defend its district title as the South Central League amateur baseball season begins on Sunday.

After missing the state tournament last year, the Bards have their eyes on climbing the SCL ranks and contending in the district. Bures said.

"We didn't play as well as we'd like to during the season; it was a tough year to end the season," he said.

Crofton Bluejays

After winning 16 of 18 league games a season ago, including three more in the district tournament, the Bluejays didn't exactly need an overhaul.

They will again rely on the same core group of players that have produced significant success for manager Carl Schieffer over the past few years.

Back for Crofton this summer are Scot Donner, Nick Hegge, Rand Thygeson, Aaron Losing, Kyle Mueller, Alex Mueller, Joe Wiebelhaus, Schieffer, Trevor Arens (he will join the team later in the summer) and Seth Erdmann (back from a knee injury).

The Bluejays also added a group of newcomers to provide some depth: Tyler Zimmerman (who was last with Crofton in 2010), Brandon Hegge, Austin Filips and Alex Filips.

No matter who is penciled into the lineup, the Bluejays will need to score more than 2013, Schieffer said. Crofton averaged 7.39 runs per game a year ago — fifth most in the league.

"This year we've got to score more runs," Schieffer said. "Last year we didn't just didn't score much when we really needed to."

"We can hold any team down, but you've still got to score to win."

A long winter may mean a slow start to the season, Schieffer said.

"I think you'll see some scores reflect that," he said. "Guys aren't going to be in the greatest of playing shape yet."

"Those first two or three games, I think are going to tell the story of how the league is going to be."

Freeman Black Sox

Despite pulling an upset in the first round of the district tournament last summer, the Black Sox came up just short of qualifying for the state tournament.

The key toward that goal for 2014? Pitching.

"We ran pretty thin by the end of the year. I pitched as much as I probably ever have for amateurs," said manager Brett Scherschligt, whose team was 6-12 in the league last year. "With both of my brothers (Lee and Allan) back healthy, that'll definitely help."

Returning for the Black Sox this summer are Josh Kroll (OF/P), Brett Piddie (OF/P), Jason Prouty (OF/P), Matt Riggs, Allan Scherschligt (C/P/OF), Brett Scherschligt (C/P/OF), Lee Scherschligt (P/IF), Austin Smith (P/IF), Adam Watson (OF/IF), Jake Weier (P/IF/OF), Kyle Weier (IF), Nathan Weier (OF/IF), Chris Wollmann and Mitch Wollmann (OF/C).

New to the team are Christian Wolfgang (P/IF) and Derek Wieman (OF), who is back after a brief stint with another team. Both should help with the pitching load, according to manager Scherschligt.

"We needed some other innings, so that's a plus," he said. "We should be a little bit better defensively, too. As long as we can find some hits, we should be OK."

It's tough, though, to climb the ranks in the always-competitive SCL, Scherschligt added.

"I think we should be better," he said. "Crofton's always tough, and Tabor came around last year at the end. Wynot's going younger, too."

Irene Cardinals

Of all the teams in the South Central League, the Cardinals will have by far the biggest change in faces for 2014.

Irene, 10-8 in the league last summer, lost a group of veterans but added 10 newcomers that figure to give the team a new look, according to manager Kendall Johnke.

"We got younger pretty quickly," he said. "We'll be a lot faster. I'll take speed over power any time."

Returning for Irene are Matt Sees (INF, P), George Sees (OF, P), Simon Healy (1B, P), Adam Gale (INF) and Brett Jensen (OF). Joining the team this summer will be Eric Anderson (OF), Andrew Hora (Utility, P), Trevor Jacobsen (Utility, P), Jack Hueber (INF, P, C), Dylan Kludt (OF), Jared Hybertson (P), Alex Loes (Utility, P), Kirby Nitzschke (Utility, C), Mitch Dunbar (OF) and Sam Parkinson (1B, C).

Without veteran Ben Sees to lead the pitching staff, the Cardinals will trot out some new faces on

the mound this summer — "they'll be able to eat some innings right away," Johnke said.

Though not to the extent Irene has, many teams across the SCL have also added some younger players, Johnke pointed out.

"We're all getting younger, and I think that should mean closer games," he said.

Lesterville Broncs

One of the league's rising teams is hoping last year's trip to the state tournament is not a one-time occurrence.

Lesterville, 13-12 overall last season, earned one of the league's five bids to the state tournament for the first time in 16 years. The Broncs then won one game (for the first time since 1993) before losing in the second round.

The key now is not taking that success for granted, according to manager Kevin Bloch.

"When they're that young, the taste that early is pretty good," he said. "Hopefully we don't relax and just expect to get back."

"You can't take for granted going one year. You have to stay hungry."

Lesterville will return many of the same faces from a year ago, and will benefit from the additions of Brandon Nickolite (a Mount Marty College pitcher) and Lesterville native Garrett Kotalik.

Also back this season are Mike Pavel, Tyler Edler, Zach Johnson, Cameron Schiltz, Cody Ulmer, Ian Powell, Andy Gall, Darrin Svacina, Tim Sternhagen, Ryan Auch and Alex Wagner.

The only loss is Jason Bierle, according to Bloch.

While pitching figures to be one of the team's strengths, defense and timely hitting will be especially important with wood bats, Bloch said.

"Consistent hitting would be a great thing to have, and right now we don't have that," he said. "Hopefully within a couple months we will."

"Our pitchers will give our defense chances to make plays. If our pitchers don't get frustrated with errors and things, we should be fine."

Menno Mad Frogs

Another one of the SCL teams to boast many of the same names from 2013 is the Mad Frogs, under manager Ryan Liebl.

A year ago, Menno was 4-14 in the league and

came up short of a state tournament berth. The team, however, will rely on the same core of players to hopefully turn the tides in 2014, according to Liebl.

"We have most of our team from last year coming back, so we should have a fun and successful season," he said.

Returning for the Mad Frogs are Spencer Neuharth, Robert Schoenfish, Jay Thaler, Tyler Miller, Ben Fischer, Josh Berndt, Will Massey, Doug Hall, Macon Oplinger, Dylan Lehr (Legion player), Tom Sattler (assistant manager) and Liebl.

Menno also added Tate Bruckner, who is back with the team after a brief stint with Yankton.

Pitching will be key for the Mad Frogs, who allowed over eight runs per game last summer.

"We're going to rely on our pitching to keep us competitive," Liebl said. "We'll have to get a lot of offense from our veteran players to be successful."

Scotland Highlanders

The Highlanders knew they had some work to do if they were going to rebound from a 1-17 season last summer, according to manager Dennis Kronaizl.

Scotland scored just 36 runs (an average of 2.0 per game) and allowed 210 (an average of 11.7 per game).

The Highlanders went out and added a group of newcomers who should help turn the tide — Jason Vaith, Wyatt Brown, Levi Geiman, Ryan Robb (the high school football coach), plus some legion players including Josh Vaith.

"Hopefully it'll be better," Kronaizl said. "We had some pitchers get hurt, so we're hoping some of those new guys will help us."

Returning for the Highlanders will be Kraig Kronaizl, Michael Kronaizl, Joe Kronaizl, Blake Gomer, Bryan Fuks, Shawn Kocourek, Paul Plante and Jared Kloucek.

The key for Scotland? Pitching.

"That's the biggest thing in our league," manager Kronaizl said. "The hitting might be slow to start (the season) with the weather, so the pitching will be tough right away."

2014 South Central League Schedule

Sunday, May 18 Freeman at Irene Lesterville at Wynot Scotland at Avon Tabor at Menno Yankton at Crofton	Thursday, June 26 Lesterville at Menno Friday, June 27 Avon at Freeman Crofton at Scotland Irene at Tabor Yankton at Wynot
Thursday, May 22 Freeman at Crofton Lesterville at Irene Menno at Avon Scotland at Yankton Tabor at Wynot	Sunday, June 29 Avon at Menno Crofton at Freeman Irene at Lesterville Wynot at Tabor Yankton at Scotland
Sunday, May 25 Crofton at Avon Freeman at Wynot Irene at Scotland Lesterville at Tabor Yankton at Menno	Tuesday, July 1 Wynot at Freeman Thursday, July 3 Irene at Avon Crofton at Menno
Thursday, May 29 Scotland at Crofton Tabor at Irene Wynot at Yankton	Friday, July 4 Lesterville at Yankton Scotland at Menno Saturday, July 5 Tabor at Lesterville
Friday, May 30 Freeman at Avon Menno at Lesterville	Sunday, July 6 Avon at Crofton Menno at Yankton Scotland at Irene Tabor at Freeman
Sunday, June 1 Avon at Irene Crofton at Wynot Freeman at Tabor Menno at Scotland Yankton at Lesterville	Thursday, July 10 Crofton at Tabor Wynot at Menno Yankton at Irene
Thursday, June 5 Irene at Yankton Lesterville at Avon Menno at Wynot Tabor at Crofton	Friday, July 11 Avon at Lesterville Freeman at Scotland Sunday, July 13 Crofton at Menno
Friday, June 6 Scotland at Freeman	Sunday, July 13 Irene at Wynot Lesterville at Freeman Scotland at Tabor Yankton at Avon
Sunday, June 8 Avon at Yankton Freeman at Lesterville Menno at Crofton Tabor at Scotland Wynot at Irene	Thursday, July 15 Menno at Freeman Thursday, July 18 Avon at Wynot Crofton at Irene Tabor at Yankton
Thursday, June 12 Irene at Crofton Wynot at Avon Yankton at Tabor	Friday, July 19 Scotland at Lesterville Sunday, July 20 Crofton at Lesterville Freeman at Yankton
Friday, June 13 Lesterville at Scotland	Sunday, July 20 Menno at Irene Tabor at Avon Wynot at Scotland
Sunday, June 15 Freeman at Menno Avon at Tabor Irene at Menno Lesterville at Crofton	District Tournament July 24-Aug. 2 at Freeman
Friday, June 20 Scotland at Wynot Yankton at Freeman	State B Tourn. Aug. 6-17 at Mitchell
Sunday, June 22 Avon at Scotland Crofton at Yankton Irene at Freeman Menno at Tabor Wynot at Lesterville	

Young Bucks Go 2-1 In Finale

SIoux FALLS — The Yankton freshmen-sophomore baseball team went 2-1 in pool play at the Ken Tomak Memorial Tournament, May 9-10 in Sioux Falls. The Bucks failed to advance out of pool play, ending their season.

STEVENS 10, YANKTON 3: Tanner Watt had two hits, and Hunter Cameron and Nate Hein each had a hit and a run scored to lead Yankton. Devin Cook and Jordan Kathol also had hits. Kade Larson walked and scored for the Bucks.

Cameron took the loss, with Lien pitching in relief.

YANKTON 4, BROOKINGS 3: Tanner Watt reached base three times, including a double, and Justin Groves had a hit and two runs scored to lead Yankton. Nate Hein also doubled. Hunter Cameron and Michael Heine each had a hit and a run scored. J.J. Payer and Jordan Kathol added hits in the victory.

Heine picked up the win, with Devin Cook throwing in relief.

YANKTON 8, O'GORMAN BLUE 3: Jordan Kathol, Tanner Watt and Cameron Schindler each had two hits, with Schindler scoring twice and Watt scoring once, to lead Yankton. Justin Leader recorded a triple. Chase Vogt had a hit. Hunter Cameron walked three times. Nate Hein and Justin Groves each reached base twice in the victory.

Kathol earned the win, with Leader throwing in relief.

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Yankton's Jensen To Golf For Mount Marty MMC Women Sign Three



P&D FILE PHOTO

Yankton's Ben Jensen sinks a short putt during the 2013 S.D. State Class AA Boys' Golf Tournament. Jensen will attend Mount Marty and golf for the Lancers.

Homer's Matthews Also Joins Program

BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK
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The Mount Marty College men's golf program didn't go far in trying to build up its program. It didn't need to.

Ben Jensen of Yankton and Collin Matthews of Homer, Nebraska, will attend Mount Marty College and play golf for the Lancers, according to a release from the institution.

The opportunity to continue competitive golf while remaining close to home was something Jensen could not pass up.

"I knew Mount Marty had a good academic base," he said. "And every other place that wanted me was a long ways away. It was a good opportunity to play college sports."

Jensen has been a part of the Yankton golf program since his freshman season, capping his career with a tie for 23rd at state this past fall in Brandon. He was also a part of the Bucks' 2013 Eastern South Dakota Conference championship squad, as well as the 2012 ESD runner-up squad.

"We knew Ben was capable of shooting good scores, and we like to start with local kids," said MMC men's golf coach Todd Schlimgen. "You can't get any more local than Yankton, and he loves the game of golf. He's going to be a good addition."

Jensen played in three state tournaments for the Bucks.

"I think he will make that step to college well," said Yankton golf coach Brett Sime. "He doesn't get rattled eas-

ily. He wasn't always the golfer with the lowest score, but he was consistent."

Jensen's approach on the course also makes him a good candidate for the collegiate level, Schlimgen said.

"Golf is such an up-and-down sport. It's good to have that even keel perspective," he said. "You are playing for five hours. If you are up and down on every shot, it's going to wear you out mentally."

The son of Wayne and Julie Jensen of Yankton, Ben Jensen plans to major in business at MMC.

Matthews was a four-time team MVP for Homer, and will be competing in the District C-2 Tournament on Monday at Indian Trails Country Club in Beemer, Nebraska. He has twice won the Crofton Invitational, and also won the South Sioux City Invitational during his career.

"Collin is a hard working athlete who loves the game of golf. He spends a lot of time playing and practicing to constantly improve," Schlimgen said. "His talent level and dedication will also give him a chance to compete for a varsity spot immediately."

The son of Terry and Cheri Matthews of Winnebago, Nebraska, Collin Matthews will major in nursing at Mount Marty College.

MMC finished 11th in the Great Plains Athletic Conference men's golf standings this past season.

You can follow James D. Cimburek on Twitter at twitter.com/JCimburek.

MMC Women Sign Three

The Mount Marty College women's basketball program has added three regional standouts for the 2014-15 season: Jenna Kittler of Dakota Dunes, Taylor Wingert of Valley Springs and Trista Morgan of Walthill, Nebraska.

"All three of these players are going to bring a good work ethic and experience to our team," said MMC women's basketball coach Tom Schlimgen. "All will represent MMC in a very positive way, and we are excited for them to become Lancers."

Kittler, a 5-8 point guard for Dakota Valley, was a four-year letterwinner for the Panthers, earning team defensive MVP honors all four seasons. She averaged 6.9 points, 2.5 rebounds, 1.6 assists and 2.1 steals per game.

Kittler earned third-team all-Dakota XII Conference honors this past season, and was a third team all-Big Sioux Conference selection in 2013. She also earned honorable mention all-BSC honors in 2011 and 2012.

A national honor society member, Kittler plans to be a pre-professional major at MMC. She is the daughter of Randy and Tracie Kittler of Dakota Dunes.



Matthews



Kittler



Wingert



Morgan