Larry Sullivan's

SPORT SIDE

Former Moor On All-Star Pace

Touching All The Bases: Bryan Harvey has accomplished much as the most storied of former Mooresville American Legion baseball Moors. Now, the former Post 66 hurler is on the verge of reaching another lofty plateau.

I managed to catch a glimpse of the mustachioed right-thander's mound act Sunday night during ESPN's telecast of the final game of the weekend series between the California Angels — Harvey's current team — and the host Detroit Tigers. Harvey was called on with one out in the eighth, with a runner on second, and his club clinging to a 2-1 lead.

Harvey, whose story keeps alive the hopes of many aspiring big leaguers, induced a back-to-the-mound hopper from the first batter he faced, and he then whiffed the second to get the Angels and starter Jim Abbott out of hot water. After the Angels failed in their attempt to increase their lead in the top of the ninth, Harvey came back to the hill for the last of the inning.

There, he notched his second and third strikeout victims of the game — out of the four batters he had faced — and came within a questionable call of collecting a fourth. Then, as pitchers are apt to do, he served up a home run ball that allowed the Tigers to tie the game. Huffed, he then mowed down the next batter on three straight pitches to shoot down his fourth strikeout.

Alas, the effort was lost in the storm, as, even after California scored a run in the top of the 10th, Detroit muscled up a rally off the pitcher called on to replace Harvey in the last of the first additional extra frame to register the come-frome-behind win.

Despite his no decision, Harvey, who was making his 31st appearance of the season, padded his stacked numbers in what is shaping up to be a possible all-star performance. In his stints, the split fingered specialist has registered 38 strikeouts. And he has managed to control his penchant for wildness by allowing just four bases on balls.

The former softball player who earned recognition and a major league contract following an informal tryout here at Moor Park is now the established closer of the Angels. In the process, he has emerged as one of the premier short-inning pitchers in the game, as his 18 saves attest. That ties Harvey as second-best not only in his American League but in the majors.

And with his Angels doing better in the Al West than most expected, it's not out of the question for Harvey to be selected as one of the pitchers on this year's all-star staff.

Pivoting On A Double Play: It's decision time for our Moors. Playing in and around the seemingly ever-present rain, Post 66 wraps up the regular-season portion of its campaign this week in time to get itself ready for in-league playoff action within the Southern District of Area III. While the regular season means a lot as far as seedings go for postseason play, it's the postseason itself that carries the most weight.

The Moors are assured of finishing among the league's top eight squads, a performance that puts them in the opening round of the SD-Area III's best-of-five-game series, set to get underway as early as possible upon the completion of the regular season. As the week began, Mooresville was in the hunt for one of the league's top four spots. Should the locals accomplish that, it would award them the homefield edge for first-round play. All teams will tell you just how much the homefield means during the second season.

It's also this time when teams began facing possible season extermination. Three losses in the playoffs means an exit to the season. The time is now for the Moors to get down to some serious playing, especially since they enter this stage as defending SD-Area III titleists.

Camping Under An Infield Fly: Speaking of decisions, ones made by a couple of former Moors cost them roster spots on this year's squad.

Pitcher-infielder-outfielder Donnell Poole and outfielder Matt Elliott, both participating members of Statesville Senior High's state 3A champions and returning starters for Mooresville's legion squad, opted to accept invitations to partake in the state games and surrender their positions with the Moors.

Players attend state game play by invitation only. It's considered an honor to be invited. Few players turn down the chance. Who's to blame the pitched-out Poole, two-time Foothills Athletic Conference player of the year, and the fleet-footed Elliott for not declining their invites? Certainly no one who has never been in that situation.

It's a shame they had to make a choice. It's obvious that both are impact players who were missed when their high school team was engaged in state postseason play and welcomed back after the Greyhounds had captured the coveted state title. They played a couple of games before taking off to play in the state games. Their presence will be sorely missed during the upcoming playoffs, but they are the only ones who can truely say whether they made the right decision. No one else can.

Driving Through The Fairway: Enough, already, is enough.

Golfers are basically a lousy lot. When they strike the ball well and score well, it's because they're that good. When they don't and don't, respectively, they always blame it on something else.

Of late, the greens at Mooresville's Municipal Golf Course have taken the brunt of this blame. Sadly, the majority of this ridicule has come from those who spend most of their time flinging shots — literally and physically — on the local spread.

Unfortunately, there are those who are doing more than just talking. They're taking action. Action such as whacking putter-head sized chunks out of the grassy greens. Now think a minute. You've got a green with grass all over it. So what do you do? You bust a hole in it. All you've accomplished is creating an ugly bare spot that will take a week or so to recover. Smart, right?

Golfers never want to take the easy way out. It's too easy. Instead of kicking — and in some cases going to even more extremes — the ground because a putt failed to reach the hole, why not try to land the ball closer to the hole in the first place? And how long does it take for common sense to sink in? If you consistently leave a putt short, why not hit it a tad bit harder. See, solutions are too simple. It's much easier to pass along the blame.

The Mooresville course is in the best shape I can remember. Sure, the greens are a little bushy, but that beats the you-know-what out of the alternative. I would rather have greens that hold and are a little slow than ones that are bare and wouldn't keep a shot dropped from straight overhead.

To me, golf is a game of constant adjustment. It's knowing not just how to hit shots but also where to hit them. The wife always wonders how I can get so much joy out of playing the same holes over and over. Little does she know that I very seldom play the same hole the same way. Few golfers do.

But many of us do play Mooresville more than any other. You'd think by now we'd adjust. Maybe that's against the golfer's code. It's so much easier to blame something else for our mistakes. Enough, though, is enough.

Bronco All-Star Teams To Meet In Tournament

Scouting reports won't be needed when Mooresville's Bronco Baseball League all-stars teams engage in postseason-opening play this weekend.

It will be a family affair when the two teams of all-stars named this season to represent the local Bronco League face each other to christen play in a double-elimination tournamemt in Spencer.

Luck of the draw pits a team of older Bronco League players, those with more than one year of playing experience in the local league, against a team comprised of players who recently completed their initial tour of duty within the local diamond circuit.

The two engage in opening-round play within the double-elimination attraction by squaring off against one another in a 10:30 a.m. battle Saturday.

The winner of the game will advance in the winner's bracket, while the loser will fall in the losers' bracket.

It marks the first year that the Mooresville Bronco League has fielded two teams of all-stars for postseason play.

Traditionally, the league, conducted through the Mooresville Recreation Department, fields a single all-star team, usually consisting of just those players with more than a single year of playing experience.

However, this summer, recreation department officials decided to field two teams in order to allow more players postseason experience.

It just so happened that, through a pre-tournament blind draw, the two Mooresville teams, each representing the local recreation department, were pitted against each other in opening-round duty.

Both teams are comprised of 15 players each.

Among the older players, at least one of them have been selected from six different teams.

Kevin Thompson will serve as the veteran team's head coach, with Gary Bumgarner as an assistant.

Members of the older squad include:

Nicholas Cline, Jeff Spencer, Brandon Potter and Bobby Cummings of the Cubs;

David Neill, Jason Josey and Cornell Harris of the Astros;

Alan Nichols, Dustin Bumgarner and Wesley Tucker of the Yankees;

Brandon Chavers and Bart Jones of the Mets;

Kyjuan Beatty and Bradley Byers of Phillies;

And Justin Sherrill of the Dodgers.

Members of the first-year Bronco League all-star team also represent all six teams.

The unit will be coached by Jack Church, with Bob Ramsay serving as an assistant.

Members of the youngest Bronco League all-star team include:

Josh Smith, Eric Thompson, Josh Graham, Jim Donaldson, Josh Ramsay and Shanto Adams of the Braves;

Zack Rhoton, Brad Christopher and Bo Adkins of the Yankees;

Joey Church and Ron Craig of the Astros;

Will Kiker and Mark Fouts of the Phillies;

Jonathan Keller of the Mets;

And Seth McCraw of the Brewers.

Both teams are guaranteed a minimum of two games in the tournament that kicks off with a host of games Saturday and continues throughout the week of the Fourth.

A total of four Mooresville teams will be engaging in tournament play in Spencer.

In addition to the two Bronco League squads, two teams will also be playing representing the local Mustang League.

All will make their debuts Saturday and, depending on whether they win or lose, will continue competing into next week before respective age division champions are determined.

Tournament play in Spencer preceeds upcoming statewide postseason play involving the players in both leagues.

Undefeated Brewers Seek Tourney Title For Encore

How do you follow an undefeated regular season?

By winning the league's postseason tournament.

After accomplishing the first, Mooresville's Brewers of the Iredell County Girls Junor Softball League seek to follow up with the second later this week.

The Brewers capped an undefeated regular-season with a 10-8 decision over the Troutman Galaxy Friday night to wind up the campaign with a glistening, 10-0 mark.

The issue, however, wasn't assured until a defensive gem was turned in by first baseman Suzy Phillips, who started a rally-killing double play with two runners on board in the top of the seventh inning in Friday's finale.

That play helped thwart Troutman's comeback and preserved the Brewers' top seed entering this week's single-elimination tournament.

As regular-season winners of the Southern Division, the Brewers recieve a first-round bye in the postseason attraction.

They will play an earlier-round winner when making their second-season debut Friday night.

The Brewers cleaned house within their seven-team division, playing all other league members at least once and facing some of them twice.

Regardless, the Brewers amassed all wins to finish at 10-0.

As a result, the Brewers take the top seed from their division into this week's tournament.

Postseason play, all of which is taking place at West Iredell High School, gets underway this (Wednesday) evening and continues through the weekend.

The Brewers will make their initial appearance in the attraction against an earlier-round survivor Friday.

In addition to first baseman Phillips, other members of the team include Marla Knox, Caroline Kelly, Kristi Knox, Debra Keller, Brooke Satterfield, Sabrina Keller, Danielle Hunter, Jamie Neill, Ashley Minton, Charlena Pinkston, Mandy Stewart and Melissa Thompson.

The team is head coached by Jerry Satterfield, with assistance from Tommy Hobbs and Jerry Kelly.

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Youngest Mustangs Debut Sat.

Youngsters get the postseason ball rolling for Mooresville's Mustang Baseball League this weekend.

The youngest of two teams of all-stars representing the local league will hit the diamond first thing Saturday morning when engaging in a double-elimination tournament in Spencer.

The all-stars make their debut in a 9 a.m. contest.

The group is one of two teams of all-stars not only selected out of the local Mustang League but also competing in the Spencer tournament.

This marks the first time that the Mooresville league will be sending two teams to compete in the annual Independence Day tournament in Spencer.

Traditionally, the league, which is conducted through the Mooresville recreation Department, sends one team of Mustang all stars to play.

This year, in an attempt to offer more league players postseason experience, the recreation department is fielding two all-star squads at both the Mustang and Bronco level.

The youngest Mustang team is comprised of players who recently completed their first seasons of play in the Mustang League.

At least one player has been named to the team from seven league members giving the club a roster of 15 players total.

It's possible that the youngest Mustang all-star team could meet the older version at some point in tournament play, depending on how the teams are paired in the brackets.

Pairings are based blind drawings by tournament officials.

The first-year Mustang all-stars are being coached by Bob Ramsay, with Frank Anthony serving as assistant coach.

Players named to the team include:

Andrew Crisco, Chris Liner, Ryan Anthony and Aaron Mercer from the Yankees;

Clark Benfield, Jerry Donaldson and Jason Manall of the Braves;

Taylor Westmoreland and Josh Witherspoon of the Bandits;

Michael Esselman and Michael Griffin of the Athletics;

Jake Russ and Joel Carpenter of the Phillies;

Jimmy Poteat of the Mets;

And Rob Griffin of the Astros.

The Mustangs will join of a host of other teams comprised of players near their own age in the annual Spencer attraction.

The tournanment kicks off with openers Saturday and continues throughout the week of the Fourth until a champion is determined.

The youngest Mustangs will be joined at the tournament site by another team of Mustang all-stars as well as two teams representing the Mooresville Bronco Baseball League.

Aerial offering holds the attention of offensive and defensive team personnel

Completing, Intercepting Passes The Idea Behind Passing League

Imagine playing football without worrying about the score.

Imagine it no more.

It's a reality this summer.

It takes the shape of a multi-school football passing league, involving Mooresville Senior High.

This marks the Blue Devils second off-season of participating in a passing league, one that emphasizes its namesake.

So much, so, in fact, that keeping track of the score is an unknown.

In passing league games, no official score is kept. That doesn't, however, keep the players unaware of whether their team is winning or losing.

It's just not as important now as, say, it will be three months from now.

As for the coaches, their main emphasis is on catching or deflecting — even intercepting — the aerial offerings, depending, of course, on which side of the scrimmage line they coach.

For offensive-minded specialists, such as Senior High's head coach Mike Carter, the stress is on the proper running of pass patterns by the wide receivers, flankers, tight ends and runningbacks, as well as the on-target throws of the quarterbacks.

Carter, nearing the beginning of his second season as the Blue Devils coach, calls most if not all of the offensive plays and pays special attention to the backfield.

For defensive coaches, the emphasis is on just the opposite.

As much as the offensive players want to run the right patterns and make good catches, the defensive players are there to interrupt pass routes and deflect or catch intended passes.

All phases of the passing league unfolded during a three-hour gathering at the Mooresville Stadium last Thursday night, as the Devils played host to the first of two such round-robin attractions.

Mooresville, which had kicked off its league ties with a similar visit earlier in the week, welcomed to town the offensive and defensive passing units from Kannapolis, West Charlotte and Charlotte Olympic.

During the course of play, the offensive and defensive units from all four saw some playing time against counterparts from the other three at least once and sometimes more.

On offense, present on the field were the quarterbacks, runningbacks, tight ends and all wide receivers. Some teams could include a center, if they so desired.

On defense, there to offer resistance were the defensive backs, linebackers and defensive ends, all who at some point during actual games partake in the defending against the pass.

Through it all, the passing league is designed to help teams work on all phases of their passing attack.

What contact there is is held to a minimum, Instead of tackling, players are tagged to stop play.

Offensive teams run play in strings of 12 against defenses before swapping places, and, later, opponents.

Games involving all four teams were taking place simultaneously.

Play began at the 40-yard-line on both sides of the field. In cases where teams reached the end zone before their alloted number of plays, the ball was moved back to the 40 for the remainder.

With no pass rush allowed, quarterbacks were to still react under true game conditions, all while receivers were being tracked by defenders, just as in actual games.

Teams are free to run the gamut of their passing attack, from set plays called in huddles to hurry-up offenses with different plays being called at the line of scrimmage.

While passing league play was initially designed to help create timing and teamwork between quarterback and receivers, Mooresville's Carter has often insisted that the time on the field works wonders for helping his defenders react accordingly in passing situations.

Of course, in the passing league, all situations are passing ones.

The emphasis is placed not so much on scoring, as the completing and non-completing of passes.

Thursday's gathering here was the first of two scheduled within a week's time for Mooresville.

This week, the Devils again entertain the units from K-Town and Olympic, while Thomasville will visit in place of West Charlotte.

Blue Devil fans may recall that last fall, it was Thomasville that knocked Mooresville from the state 2A playoffs with an overtime third-round triumph.

All passing league activity, which is sanctioned by the governoring body of high school athletics, is designed to help the teams enjoy a jump start on regular season practice that is officially scheduled to get underway in August.

Penguins cannot fly but are excellent swimmers.

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