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Lining up throws and hitting the cut-off man are emphasis of this throwing drill

Smiles Replace Laughter After Week-long Elite Baseball Camp

When the Elite Baseball Camp opened here early last week, counselors couldn't hide their laughter when guiding their struggling troops through some of the most basic steps.

But by week's end, smiles on the faces of those same troops told a different tale.

"It's great to see a kid smile when he knows he's learned something," offered Butch Garcia, one of the four camp coaches on hand daily to instruct the nearly 30 participants through daily routines, from inside the third-base dugout on a humid Friday morning.

"When we started," he continued, "it was kind of funny watching them do some of the things we did. But you could tell a difference by the middle of the week. And now, most of them know how to do the basics. That's what we get out of it."

Garcia and his staff of three counselors guided the campers through daily drills and competition beginning at 9 a.m. each day and continuing until around 3 p.m., with activities taking place at Liberty Park.

During that time, the campers, ranging between six and 14 years of age, touched base on every fundamental of the game.

This included proper instruction and repetitive drills on pitching, hitting, throwing, catching and running the bases.

"We try to cover a little bit of everything," revealed Garcia, the general manager among the camp coaches based on his minor league playing experience. "We can't spend a whole lot of time on any one thing, but we do offer a lot of repeating in the basic areas."

Garcia was joined on site by fellow counselors Ron Reese, Kevin Shea and Mike Weakland, all who took time to instruct the participants in various phases of the game.

During the morning camp hours, time was spent basically on instruction and drills.

This included instruction on fielding grounders, gloving fly balls, throwing to proper bases, pitching, catching, hitting and sliding.

Drills were followed by various competitions among individuals and groups.

In the afternoon, the campers were divided into equal groups for several hours of playing under game-like conditions and situations.

The camp stresses the basic fundamentals and mechanics of the game, with emphasis on the fun that playing baseball provides.

It marked the first appearance in Mooresville of the Elite Camp, conducted through Elite Sports Consultants, Inc., based in Charlotte.

Most of those attending last week's camp here ranged primarily seven and 10 years in age, and the group included one area girl.

"It's never too early to start teaching the kids the right way to play," stated Garcia, formerly a member of the Charlotte Knights, a double-A affiliate of the Chicago Cubs. "We use instruction and drills to try and teach them the right way. There's nothing better than watching a kid improve in just a single week."

The camp being conducted here was one of two being held by Elite Sports in the area. A similar camp also took place last week in Newton.

This marks the first year that Elite Sports has been conducting youth baseball camps.

The camp here, conducted in conjunction with the Mooresville Recreation Department, may become a regular feature locally, based on last week's turnout.

Hectic Week Keeps Moors Alive For Homefield Edge In Playoffs

Mooresville's American Legion baseball Moors have been through it all during the past week.

Two games, at different sites, in one day.

Three games in two days.

Four games in three days.

And six games within a six-day span.

Still, for Post 66, it could be worse.

For through it all, the Moors managed to survive and stay alive for a possible homefield advantage entering the opening stages of the upcoming Southern Division of Area III playoffs.

Mooresville endured through a make-or-break, six-game binge by producing a 4-2 record and remaining among the SD-Area III's top four positioners with a single contest left to play.

That kept the Moors in the running for the homefield edge, awarded to the top four regular-season finishers, in the opening-round of the league's best-of-five playoff series.

Postseason play in the SD-Area III must get underway by tomorrow (Thursday) night.

Post 66 could have all but wrapped up a top-division finish with a win at Mocksville Monday night, but instead it was the homestanding regular-season champions who secured their league ranking with a rambling, 24-9 pelting of the guests.

That decision came a day after one of the most hectic for the Moors in recent seasons.

On Sunday alone, Mooresville faced a pair of different league opponents at different sites with a home-and-away doubledip.

At home Sunday afternoon, the Moors completed a season series sweep over Kannapolis with a 9-3 triumph.

Later that night, at North Wilkesboro, the guests trimmed the hosts, 8-6, for a rare doubleheader sweep.

Saturday night at home, Post 66 had a modest two-game winning streak snapped as invading Stanly County posted a 6-3 triumph.

The previous Thursday evening, Mooresville gloved what was its second straight win with a comeback, 12-10 knocking off of homestanding K-Town.

And on Tuesday, in the opening game of the hectic swing, it proved to be a pivotal one as Mooresville salvaged a split of its season series with Rowan County following a close-knit, 5-3 win.

As a result of the full week's work, Mooresville ventured into its final game of the regular season toting an 8-7 league record, good enough for a share of third.

At Mocksville Monday night, the guests grabbed a quick, 5-0 lead in the top of the first and enjoyed a 6-3 edge going into the bottom of the third before the hosts turned on the juice.

From there, Mocksville-Davie took command with a two-run third and a seven-run fourth. The home team padded its lead with a run in the fifth, six in the sixth, two in the seventh and three more in the eighth.

That proved more than enough needed to offset Mooresville's three runs scored in the seventh.

Tracy Shinn absorbed the pitching loss after coming on in relief of starter Bryan Wagner. Ryan Douglas, Matt McConnell and Bill Mclaughlin all took turns trying to cool off the host Mocksville bats.

Offensively, the visitors were paced by the two hits each gathered in by Decomba Conner, Ezra Cowan and Shinn.

Conner clubbed a solo home run in the second for his run batted in, while Shinn clobbered a three-run blast in the first that drove in his three runs. Cowan finished with two runs batted in.

Sunday night at North Wilkesboro, Mooresville swept the second half of its day-night twinbill with the 8-6 win.

The guests never trailed, scoring twice in the first inning, once in the third, tallying three times in the fourth and adding single runs in the eighth and ninth.

Those final two runs proved especially vital, as North Wilkesboro scratched for two runs in the ninth to pull within two after having tallied one run each in the first and third frames followed by a two-run sixth.

Jason Harkey started and gathered in the win, allowing eight hits while striking out two. McConnell also pitched, as did Douglas, with the latter picking up the save.

Roy Frye and Tim Kepley each pecked out three hits apiece, the former driving in three runs and the latter one. Toby Tomlin lined a pair of base hits and plated a runner, while Mike Cummings also delivered two base knocks.

At home Sunday afternoon to entertain Kannapolis in a game earlier delayed by rain, Post 66 made the wait worthwhile with the 9-3 triumph.

Lefthander Rod Bowers went the distance to notch the win, allowing the three runs on six hits with eight strikeouts.

Bowers also helped his cause at the plate by picking up three hits, joining Tomlin in that regard, while Frye added two base hits.

Pinch-hitter Brad Cozart delivered a solo home run in the seventh.

Mooresville put the issue away with a five-run first inning and added a single run in the fourth, plated two in the sixth and added another run in the seventh.

K-Town got to Bowers for single runs in the sixth, seventh and eighth innings.

At home Saturday night to face Stanly County, Moresville never held the lead after jumping out to a 1-0 edge after one inning of play.

Stanly inched ahead with two runs in the second and added another run each in the third and fourth innings before closing out its scoring with two runs in the sixth.

The Moors managed their final two runs in the last of the fifth.

Frye was the starting and losing pitcher, going the distance in the process.

Cummings rapped a pair of hits to lead the hosts offensively, with Conner, Frye, Shinn, Keply, Cozart and Wagner all chipping in with a base hit each. Shinn was credited with a run batted in.

In Kannapolis Thursday night, the Moors bounced back from a 6-1 deficit after two full innings to outscore the hosts, 12-10.

Mooresville notched a run in the first and added two in the third before taking the lead with three runs in the fourth. Post 66 followed single run efforts in the seventh and eighth stanzas with a three-run rally in the ninth.

K-Town, despite the early lead, faded after scoring three times in both the first and second frames. The hosts added two runs apiece in the fifth and ninth innings.

Cowan weathered the early assault and wound up going the distance to pick up the pitching win, allowing the 10 runs on 12 hits with five strikeouts.

Shinn was the workhorse at the plate, banging out three hits, including a double and a two-run home run, and finishing with two runs batted in. Cummings belted a two-run homer in the fourth inning and plated three teammates in the game.

Cowan and Frye each contributed a pair of base hits.

At home Tuesday to entertain arch-rival Rowan County, Mooresville squared the season series with the 5-3 win.

Frye went the distance to hurl the win, allowing the three runs on six hits while fanning nine.

Tomlin socked a solo home run in the seventh that provided some insurance, for his second hit of the game and his second run batted in. Conner, Kepley and McLaughlin all each added a base hit.

Mooresville was to conclude the regular-season portion of its season with a game at Stanly County Tuesday night.

The Moors will then have a day off before engaging in first-round tournament play tomorrow (Thursday) night.

A top-four finish for Post 66 will assure it of the homefield edge for the first round, best-of-five series during which games are held on consecutive nights at alternating sites.

Mustang Veterans Play Sat.

Veterans of the Mooresville Mustang League put their experience on the line under postseason tournament fire this weekend.

They do so when christening play in a pre-Independence Day tournament in Spencer Saturday evening.

The all-stars, comprised entirely of players who recently completed their second seasons of play in the local Mustang League, make their second-season debut in a 5 p.m. contest.

The team is one of two all-star units that is not only representing the Mooresville league this season but it also participating in the same annual double-elimination tournament.

Another select squad hailing from the local league, it comprised of players who have finished one season of play in the age division, is also competing in the same tournament.

It's possible that, through the playing brackets, the two teams could face each other.

Pairings for the tournament are confirmed via a blind draw.

The two teams won't meet in the opening round, as the youngest Mustang all-stars make their tournament debut Saturday morning.

This marks the first time that Mooresville is sending tow teams from the same age division into postseason play.

In the past, only one team has been named to represent the Mooresville Recreation Department in the tournament.

However, local recreation officials this year agreed to field two teams in order to allow more players postseason experience.

The oldest of the two Mustang all-stars squad consists of the most experienced players in the league.

At least one member of six different teams in the local league has been named as an all-star.

The team will be coached into action by Mike Sherrill, also a coach during this past regular season.

Members of the all-star team include:

Josh Sherrill, Brian Tilley, Matthew McKenzie, Richard Floyd and Travis Cartwright of the Pirates;

Scott Brotherton, Sammy Jepko and Jason Locey of the Braves;

Matthew Thompson and Jonathan Barnette of the Phillies;

Asher Stevenson and Josh McAllister of the Astros;

Chris Haire and Michael Cook of the Athletics;

And Chris Baynard of the Yankees.

The tournament opens with play Saturday and continues throughout next week until a Mustang-level champion is declared.

Losing his helmet in the process, Kepley hits the dirt to beat throw

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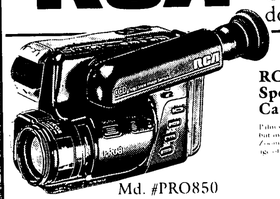

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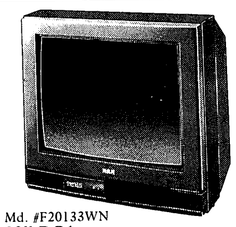

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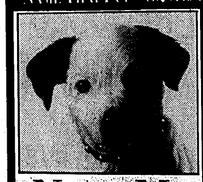

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