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SPORT SIDE

The Season's Haves, Have-Nots

Touching All The Bases: It's a burning question exciting most and haunting some:

Can Mooresville's Post 66 American Legion baseball Moors come anywhere close to duplicating the kind of simmering summer they thrilled themselves and their growning number of followers with during their cherished 1990 season?

For obvious reasons, most of us hope the answer is a definitive yes!

Among those reasons:

Last year's team manufactured an overall record of 29 wins against 16 defeats, allowing it to set the new standard for the program. Before last summer, no previous band of Moors had moved to within a single game of the coveted 30-win barrier, making the 1990 edition the winningest ever in the storied history of the local legion program;

Included among those wins were enough victories within Post 66's own Southern Division of Area III to earn the unit regular-season championship honors, making it one of the few to win the divisional title;

Not satisfied with just that, Mooresville continued its winning ways to bust past a a trio of same-division opponents in order to become the program's second ever to reign as Southern Division champions, and advance into the equivalent of the state's American Legion quarterfinals;

And it didn't stop there. In helping mark the precedence-setting campaign, the 1990 version became the most celebrated of any prior squad when emerging as Area III title holders, the first batch of Moors to hold such a distinction. In the process, Mooresville moved into the state's semfinals, making them one of four legion teams statewide in quest of the North Carolina crown;

Only there, with success assured, did the storybook season end, it closing with a series loss at the hands of eventual state champion Caldwell County.

Regardless, the Moors were the story of last summer, and it's almost a shame to force those memories on the back burner in order to make room for the ones upcoming.

But upcoming they are, as Post 66 unofficially christens this the "season after" in the form of a pre-season exhibition game Sunday afternoon. The Moors, who like their fans hope to hold on to the old as long as possible, start cranking out the new when entertaining second-year program Denver on the Mooresville Senior High diamond this weekend The game features a 3 p.m. start, giving the Moors their only afternoon appearance of the season.

It is the first of two home exhibitions this season for Mooresville, which begins official defense of its Southern Division regular-season and postseason championship the following Thursday night with a road game at divisional member Concord. Post 66 will wrap up its exhibition schedule May 29 by hosting Kernersville. With the exception of Sunday's game, all others will feature 7:45 p.m. starting times. The Moors will again play all their home games on the Senior High field.

The Moors enter the pre-season portion of the slate somewhat short-handed, with players off two of their feeder high schools entering this week engaged in statewide prep postseason play. Statesville, which won the regular-season championship of the Foothills Athletic Conference, and Mooresville, which finished among the top three positions in its Southern District Seven Conference, will both keep players as long as they are needed in the high school playoffs.

The remainder of the Moors roster is being made up of players from South Iredell and West Rowan high schools, as well as others eligible either by residences or by receiving official team releases from other teams.

Unlike the past few years, Mooresville no longer fields the only legion team in Iredell county. Statesville, whose program folded several seasons ago, has returned to the scene, so Post 66 returns to its former recruiting territory that consists of part of Iredell and Rowan counties. Veteran skipper Whitey Meadows is back in uniform for what will be his 20th season at the helm.

In helping the Moors kick-off their new campaign, season ticket sales are briskly underway. The tickets sell for $14 each and award the buyer a total of 10 regular-season home games. Based on at-the-gate prices, the season-ticket package provides three games free. Tickets can be purchased from any member of the Gresham-Baker American Legion Post 66.

Camping Under An Infield Fly: Mooresville's baseball and softball seasons didn't end with the final week of regular-season play.

Both the Blue Devils and Devilettes traveled different paths to extend their seasons into this week's statewide 2A postseason play.

For the Lady Devils, they won the games they had to down the stretch — including the clincher against the top-rated team in the SD-7 — to nail down a third-place finish and pocket the final playoff berth available. The Devilettes entered this week scheduled to play at East Surry, with that winner moving into Friday's second round.

The Lady Devils, who finished 10-6 in the league, used a win over regular-season champion West Lincoln in their homefield finale to lock up the third-place slot, allowing them to withstand a rain-marred loss to second-division member Bessemer City in the regular-season finale for both teams late last week.

Mooresville's baseball Blue Devils, however, traveled a completely different route to qualify for this week's opening-round of state postseason play. It was a path most teams would take in order to miss the playoffs.

The Devils dropped their final three games, lost three of their final four and won just two games in the last three weeks of play — one of them via forfeit — and yet still finished third, good enough to earn a season extension. Mooresville completed SD-7 play with a 9-7 record to officially tie for second place with Maiden.

As a result, though they tried to miss the party, the Devils made it anyway, and headed into this week preparing to face homestanding Swannanoa Owen. It marks Mooresville's fourth straight appearance in the state 2A baseball playoffs.

Mooreville's girls join teams from West Lincoln and Bandys in the state's softball playoffs West bracket, while baseball crews from SD-7 members Cherryville and Maiden join Senior High's Devils among those in quest of the state title. All are engaged in single-elimination play.

Pivoting On A Double Play: As much as we've got going on area baseball and softball diamonds, haven't you noticed something missing?

It's Mt. Ulla's Cardinals of the North Carolina Stan Musial League. They're not around this summer.

For the first time in memory, there is no Mt. Ulla team competing in the local league. Interest waned among those who have played over the past few years, and with several established players having aged out, there wasn't enough of a showing this season for the team to be fielded.

As a result, the Iredell County Raiders, fielding several local players, are the area's lone contribution to the semi-pro circuit. They play their games on weekends on the North Iredell High School field.

The thinking is that Mt. Ulla's hiatus from the league roster will be a short-lived one. Here's another hoping that's the case.

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Devils Do It Despite Defeats, Qualify For Postseason Play

Mooresville finished its baseball season like a team trying to miss the state 2A playoffs.

And the Devils failed.

Despite losing three of their last four games — all in succession — the Blue Devils still wound up finishing among the Southern District Seven Conference's triumphant trio that will represent the league in this week's statewide postseason play.

Mooresville, which earlier in the season's second half endured through a three-game losing skid only to improve from third place in the standings to second during that span, appeared to be a team destined for a season extension, as last week's three defeats kept it in a second-place tie.

The Devils, once among league contenders, brought the regular-season portion of its agenda to a close when entertaining frontrunning and undefeated Cherryville Thursday night, and the hosts further dented their own late-season showing while providing an outlet for the visiting Ironmen to add polish their own after falling by a onesided, 16-6 margin.

Earlier in the week, in the team's final road trip of SD-7 play, it, too, went unrewarded as second-division dwelling West Lincoln slapped past its guests and the latter's ace via a 5-4 decision that did little to dampen the local's playoff possibilities.

"Is this something or what," shrugged Joe Pinyan, backing into the playoff berth as reward for this his first season as Mooresville's head coach. "We're extremely lucky to be in the playoffs at all. We definitely haven't played like a postseason team. Anytime you end a season with three losses, and still finish second, you know somebody's watching over you. Hopefully, the guys realize that we can't lose anymore."

Mooresville has had its share of late-season lossos.

Entering last week's play, the Devils had won just two of their previous four games, one of them coming courtesy of a win by forfiet.

After opening the week with a loss to Maiden Monday, the Devils followed it with the setbacks to West Lincoln and, finally, Cherryville, that capped its season.

As a result, Mooresville coughed through the league's final stages and wound up with a 9-7 showing within the circuit, good enough for a share of second with Maiden.

By virtue of a tiebreaking system, Mooresville, which split its season series with Maiden, received the league's number-two seed.

The Devils played nothing like a playoff-bound team down the stretch, lowlighted by its showing against a Cherryville squad that entered town Thursday night already assured of a first-place finish and shooting for an unbeaten record against league opposition.

Mooresville obliged, surrendering four runs in the top of the third, allowing another three to score in the top of the fourth and then giving up five runs in the sixth to face a 12-0 deficit.

The Devils showed some life in their half of the sixth, cutting the lead in half with six runs, before Cherryville postscripted its perfect record with four more runs in the seventh to account for the final winning margin.

"We were hoping to at least end the season on a winning note," shrugged Pinyan, "but we didn't. We knew going in that we were in the playoffs, we just weren't sure exactly where we'd finish. It would have been much better if we could have put together a little better showing."

In what turned out to be the team's last homefield apoeparance, lefthander Rod Bowers started and suffered the loss, with relief help from fellow southpaw Daron Patterson. Bowers returned to the hill later in the contest to finish pitching.

Combined, they gave up the 16 runs on 14 hits with eight strikeouts.

At the plate, Nathan White picked up a pair of base hits, while Patterson, Bowers, Otis Cowan, Ricky Greene, T.J. Goswick, Roy Frye, Sean Templeton and Tremayne Patterson all collected a hit.

Bowers drove home two runs, while Goswick, Cowan and Tremayne Patterson all plated a runner each.

At West Lincoln a couple of afternoons earlier, Mooresville sent its ace pitcher, Frye, to the mound in hopes of salvaging the final week.

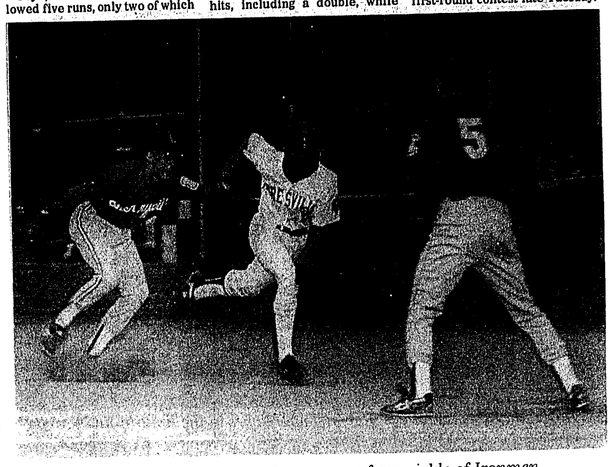
Alas, it was to no avail, as the guests committed four errors that aided their demise in the 5-4 loss.

Frye, who went the distance, allowed five runs, only two of which were earned, while giving up five hits and whiffing eight, dipping his record for the season to 8-3.

The Devils tallied a run in the first inning, added two in the third and scored their last run in the seventh.

Frye tried his best to aid his cause at the plate, ripping three hits, including a double, while Daron Patterson chipped in with two hits. Goswick, Cowan, and Brian Thompson all contributed a base knock each.

Despite the last-season slump, Mooresville earned the SD-7's number-two playoff seed and entered this week prepared to take it to Swannanoa Owen for a first-round contest late Tuesday.



Daron Patterson tries in vain to escape from pickle of Ironmen

Pirates Protect Treasure

The Pirates not only continued to protect the treasure within the boys Mustang Baseball League last week.

The also continued being it.

The Pirates, winners of both their games last week, stayed unbeaten the process, running their record to the spotless, 6-0 mark.

In so doing, the Pirates continued their stay atop the league rankings, sporting its only undented record.

The Phillies stayed hot on the trail last week and remain in second place, at 5-1.

The Astros, at 3-2, and Athletics, at 3-3, round out the list of teams performing at or better than the .500 mark.

The rest of the league standings finds the Braves next, at 2-3, followed by the Bandits, at 2-4, the Yankees, at 1-4, and the Mets, at 0-5.

The Pirates, Astros and the Phillies joined forces to emerge as the lone teams with unbeaten records last week. They combined for a 6-0 mark as each won twice without a loss.

Individually, the Phillies' Matt Holbrook stood alone at the plate, doing so by becoming the only player to smack as many as four safeties in a single game and joining a group of players who tagged a home run.

Others in that latter group included the Braves' Scott Brotherton, Michael Cook and Mark Walls of the Athletics, and the Yankees' Chris Liner.

Play in the Mustang League is conducted through the Mooresville Recreation Department.

Games, all of which take place at Liberty Park, are played on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, and Saturday mornings.

Players in the league are those boys born between Aug. 1, 1980 and July 31, 1982.

Mustang League Standings

Pirates	6-0
Phillies	5-1
Astros	3-2
Athletics	3-3
Braves	2-3
Bandits	2-4
Yankees	1-4
Mets	0-5

South Iredell Scores In State 3A Track Meet

Care to be a classic soccer player?

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Tryouts for the Iredell Select Soccer Association's North Carolina Youth Soccer Association's fall season Classic Soccer League teams will take place later this spring.

The weekend of June 1-2 has been set aside for the team tryout sessions.

This past spring, the ISSA fielded five classic teams, which competed against other squads from throughout the state.

This fall, the local association's goal is to field six classic teams.

Tryouts for the 1980 and 1981 classic soccer teams will take place at several locations around the county.

June 1, sessions will be held at both the Mooresville Soccer Complex, from 10 a.m. until noon, and at Barium Springs, from 2-4 p.m.

The following day, tryouts will be held at East Iredell School, from 2-4 p.m.

Players interested in participating need to attend only one of the team tryouts.

Players born on or after Aug. 1, 1979 are eligible to compete on the 1980 team, while those born or or after Aug. 1, 1980 are eligible for the 1981 squad.

For more information on the classic soccer program, contact Jerry Satterfield, at 663-6793, or James Arnold, at 878-9407.

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