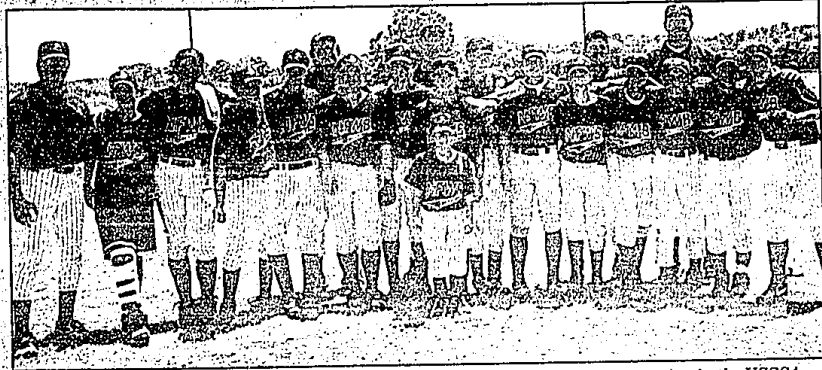


Cobras conclude season



Top-10 team: The 13-year-old NFWB Cobras finished ninth among the 37 teams competing in the USSSA World Series in Tulsa, Okla. The team members are (left to right) coach Jim Darga, Ben Darga, Kevin Zerbo, Andy Wingert, Steven Rabe, coach Bill Clark, Danny Graham, Matt Clark, Brian Smith, boy Brady Rodriguez, coach Kevin Wilkinson, Ethan Wilkinson, Danny Lentz, Evan Rodriguez, coach Randy Rodriguez, Doug Pickens, coach Dan Petry, Matt Petry, Sam Grossman and Nicholas Vitais.

D.C.I. readies for Johnstown tourney

Livonia Decision Consultants, Inc. will play in the All-American Amateur Baseball Association national tournament in Johnstown, Pa., and it's a safe bet the hitters are looking forward to the trip more than the pitchers.

The double-elimination tournament, which begins Saturday, means a return to aluminum bats, which weren't used in the recently-completed Adray Metro Baseball Association.

D.C.I. coach Mike George said pitching carried his team in the wooden bat league, leading to a first-place finish in the Collegiate Division with a 15-11-1 overall record.

George anticipates the aluminum bats and pickups Mike Daguanno (Hines Park) and Eric Hardin (Livonia Adray) will help the offense. Daguanno, a first baseman and designated hitter from Farmington Hills and Detroit Catholic Central, was a first-team All-Midwest Collegiate Conference choice as a sophomore at the University of Detroit-Mercy. Hardin is a first baseman from Oakland University.

George also has added pitchers Nick Latra (Hines Park), from Farmington and Central Michigan University, and Matt Pike (Michigan Lake Area Rams),

BASEBALL

who also can play in the outfield. D.C.I. won't know who it plays until the draw is made Friday.

"We're definitely adding some offense to our ballclub. They're going to play; I'm not bringing them down to sit," George said. "I think Daguanno was the most feared hitter in the league. I don't like facing him with no one on base, let alone in scoring position. And Hardin and Pike add pop to the lineup. I'll probably hit Daguanno third, Hardin fifth and Pike sixth."

"We were not a very good offensive team but now it's aluminum, and it will be interesting to see what happens. Another coach in our league (Downriver Adray's Jim DeSana) said his team hit four homers all year and hit six or seven in one game in an aluminum bat tournament. We hit seven or eight balls this year that if we were using aluminum bats would have been out."

George said D.C.I. ace right-hander John Stieger (Michigan State), 6-2 during Adray play, will get the opening game start on the mound.

"John gives us a legitimate chance to win every time he takes the mound," George said.

If D.C.I. wins the first game, George plans on starting Pike in the second game, giving him enough time to rejoin the Rams, who will compete in the National Amateur Baseball Federation World Series later next week.

If D.C.I. loses its first game, George said he'll give Tim Miller (Livonia Franklin/Wayne State) the start in the second game. Miller was D.C.I.'s No. 2 starter, posting a 6-2 record.

"First of all, I appreciate (Rams coach) Rick Berryman letting us take one of his kids," George said. "If we win the first game, I'll have Pike throw Game 2 and that will still give him enough rest to rejoin the Rams for their tournament. If we lose the first game, I'll pitch Miller in Game 2 because Stieger and Miller are the ones who got us this far and I can't see not giving them this experience."

George plans on shuffling his lineup at the top of the order. Infielder Ron Blackmore (Livonia Churchill/Henry Ford CC) will likely move into the leadoff position, replacing outfielder Storm Kirchenbaum (Henry Ford), who will likely bat near the bottom of the order.

Infielder Billy LaRosa (University of Michigan) will move from No. 3 to the No. 2 spot.

"If Kirchenbaum bats ninth,

that gives Blackie a chance to do a lot at leadoff," George said. "LaRosa is real good with the bat; at No. 2, he can bunt and hit behind the runners."

Catcher Chuck Van Roby (Henry Ford) will remain in the cleanup position, where he leads the team in RBI, and George has a good feeling about third baseman C.J. Ghannam (Farmington Harrison/U-M).

"He's been picking it up some and when he gets the aluminum in his hands, I just have a feeling he's going to have a big series," George said.

This is the second time one of George's D.C.I. teams has reached the AAABA national tournament. D.C.I. made an early exit, losing two and winning none in 1995.

"We'd like to win a few," George said. "I don't know if we're good enough to win it, but we have a good chance of sticking around a few days."

Baseball from page C1

In Friday's opener, Livonia Travel unloaded for 17 hits in a 13-2 triumph over the Long Island (N.Y.) Dodgers as Bob Malek (Redford Catholic Central) went 4-for-5 with a pair of doubles and four RBI.

Casey Rogowski (CC) added a three-run homer, while Dave Lusky (CC) contributed three hits. Winning pitcher Roy Rabe (Livonia Stevenson) and Mario D'Herin (CC) added two hits apiece.

Rabe pitched four scoreless innings to pick up the win. He struck out seven and allowed just two hits. Mark Cole (CC) finished up.

In the second-round that ended at 2:15 a.m. Saturday, Livonia Travel hurler Jon Ritzler (Stevenson) pitched a complete game in a 5-4 win over Wirth (Tenn.).

Livonia Travel had just one hit but was the recipient of 12 walks. LT won it in the bottom of the seventh.

LT completed round-robin play Saturday with a 8-5 victory over Fort Wayne (Ind.) as Mike Fisher (Farmington Harrison) brought home Malek with the game-winning sacrifice fly.

Derek Fox (Farmington High) pitched four scoreless innings of relief of Lusky to pick up the win. He struck out five.

Concealed stays unbeaten

Concealed Security's 11-year-old baseball team remained undefeated through seven games in the Continental Amateur Baseball Association World Series in Tarkio, Mo.

Jeff Richard hit a three-run homer Monday to help Concealed win its seventh straight, 7-3, over Puerto Rico.

Canton's Chris Ruain pitched the victory, striking out six and walking none. Richard went 3-for-3 to raise his tournament average to .722 (13-for-18).

Concealed whipped Omaha, Neb., earlier Monday, 13-5, as winning pitcher Philip Mabey (Livonia) raised his season record to 12-1 in relief of starter Eric Vojtkofsky (Wayne).

Richard was 3-for-4 with four RBI, and Ryan Shay (Garden City) was 2-for-4.

In a battle of unbeaten teams (4-0) Sunday, Concealed edged

St. Louis, Mo., 6-5. Alan Hagedon (Westland) earned the win after taking over from Eric Driscollman. Hagedon's record is 7-1.

Richard was 2-for-3 and had the game-winning single that scored Vojtkofsky. Concealed rallied from a 5-1 deficit to win.

Concealed mercied Colorado on Saturday for its fourth victory, 9-1. Casey Sargent was the winning pitcher.

Matt Rodighiero (Farmington Hills) and Richard had two hits each in Concealed's 6-1 defeat of Knoxville, Tenn., earlier Saturday. Shay (7-3) was the winning pitcher.

San Diego was the only other unbeaten team in the tournament. Concealed was scheduled to play Kingwood, Texas, Wednesday morning and the San Diego-Hawaii winner Thursday evening. The final is Friday.

Post 346 goes out early

Farmington American Legion Post 346 lost its first two games and was eliminated from the NABP regional tournament in Toledo, Ohio.

Jim Markay pitched a solid game July 30 to lead Joliet, Ill., to a 10-2 victory over Farmington. He walked three and struck out three.

Andy Gutierrez had two of Post 346's five hits. Jon Rospierski, who wasn't fully recovered from an injury to his pitching hand, started and pitched two innings, taking the loss.

Shawn Morrison pitched a complete game against Kenosha, Wis., later that day, but Farmington came up short again, 8-5.

Morrison allowed eight hits but walked only two and struck out nine.

Post 346 (18-7) had 16 hits but left 13 runners stranded. Joe Paletta was 3-for-4; Gutierrez, Jim Carson, Rospierski and Bill Kandilian had two hits apiece.

Diamondbacks win title

With 14-1 and 6-5 victories, the Diamondbacks swept their best-of-three Plymouth Canton Junior Baseball League F League Boys series (ages 14-15) against the Rockies. Jim Kowalik went 7-for-7 in the series and scored six runs; Mike Werner and Brian Hall were 5-for-7.

Madness drops prelim games

The Motor City Madness is learning that there are no "freebies" in the Amateur Softball Association Girls 16-and-under National Fastpitch Championships.

In preliminary action Tuesday at Founders Park in Farmington Hills to determine seedings for the 80-team, double-elimination tournament, the host Madness lost to Hi Boy Pride (Mo.), 2-0, and Quad City (Iowa) Bat Busters, 4-3.

"You can't afford to give up runs in a tournament like this because the teams are just too good," Madness manager Gar Frantz said.

"And we're not hitting the ball like we can, or getting the bunts down to put pressure on the other team."

Christina Censor two-hit the Madness in the opener. Pride hurler struck out four and walked three, outdueling Madness ace Amanda Fitzgerald,

who gave up six hits and struck out eight. Both Pride runs were unearned.

Quad City rallied from a 3-1 deficit with three runs in the sixth to hand the Madness its second loss.

Co-host Compunware won its tournament opener Tuesday with a 3-1 win over the Greenwood (Ind.) Impact.

Action continues through the weekend at both Founders Park and Power fields in Novi.

Avenge Cancer!

Join the Oakland Regional Board of Trustees of the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute, Robbie Timmons of WXYZ, the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers and WXDG The Edge for a benefit showing of **The Avengers** starring Ralph Fiennes, Uma Thurman and Sean Connery

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