

Pioneers competing in 7-on-7 scrimmages

BY JEFFERY SIMMONS
Sports Editor for the Southern Standard
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

It didn't take long after the dead period was lifted for the Pioneers to get back in action. The Warren County High School football team hit the practice field Monday morning, then spent the afternoon in Cookeville taking part in 7-on-7 scrimmages.

The Pioneers faced off against Cookeville, Stone Memorial and Upperman on the afternoon, giving all the

teams a chance to knock off some rust after taking the last few weeks off during a mandatory break dictated by the TSSAA.

"It was about like last year – a little sluggish. Every team is on the first day," said WCHS coach Tom Moore. "We don't have any real practice time to get ready and it forces you to get some of your passing game and secondary work in quickly. It does help us because we don't have a huge assortment to practice against, so it helps to go against other teams."

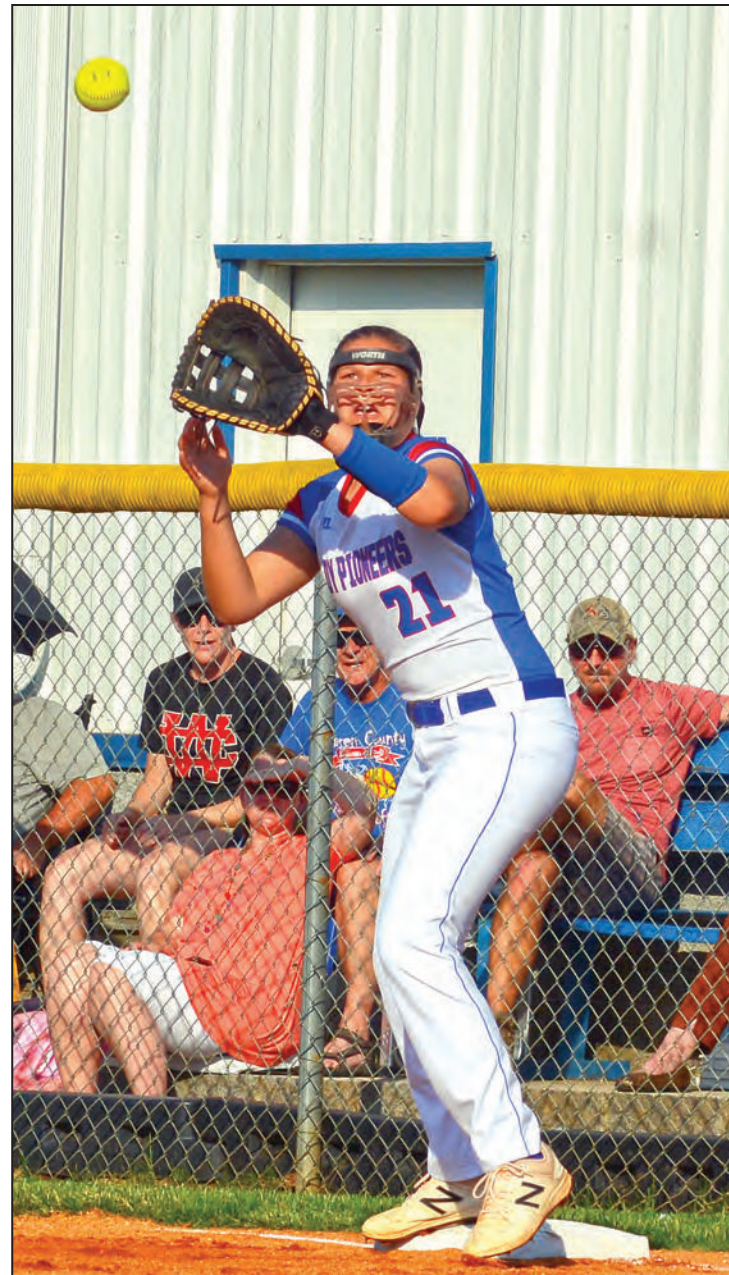
The Pioneers performed admirably in all three scrimmages, taking home a victory against the Cavaliers after close losses to Stone Memorial and Upperman.

A big question throughout the offseason will be who will take the reins of the Pioneer offense following the departure of record-setting QB Isaiah Grayson. Bryson Elrod and Clay Thompson got plenty of work in, as did an assortment of offensive weapons.

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Coach Tom Moore runs his team through drills during Tuesday's workouts. The Pioneers have been in action in Cookeville this week for 7-on-7 competitions. Warren County is now 37 days from kickoff against the DeKalb County Tigers.



Lexie Chadwell is continuing her softball career with the Motlow Lady Bucks.

Chadwell makes her mark with Motlow

BY JEFFERY SIMMONS
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Lexie Chadwell loves softball. And now she gets to enjoy her love a little longer.

The former Lady Pioneer signed Tuesday to continue her softball career at Motlow Community College. Just like with her favorite sport, playing for the Lady Bucks and going to the Lynchburg campus was love at first sight.

"It just felt like home. And Janice (Morey) is awesome and

I can't wait to play for her," said Chadwell, who plans on pursuing a career in nutrition. "The environment is awesome."

Chadwell started playing at age 6, taking the fields locally. She went on to play for the WCMS and WCHS Lady Pioneers under the guidance of Gooby Martin at both places.

Martin saw Chadwell do things the right way day after day, grooming herself into a sensational softball player.

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Debating the direction of youth sports

It will be a changing of the guard many will point to if participation in baseball and softball drops so low that leagues can no longer be formed.

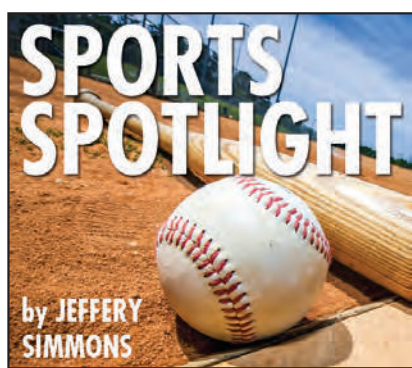
When the leagues went from the Warren County Youth Baseball and Softball Association, featuring a dedicated group of volunteers, into city control, many pondered the significance. With league participation steadily decreasing (the number of teams in ages 7 and up have never reached more than 27 under Parks and Recreation control, while the previous four years the average number of teams was 40.5), league coaches this year routinely longed for the past.

Past league commissioners are still spoken about with reverence among the baseball family in Warren County.

Leslie Henegar. Earl Partin. Jeff McGee. Don McBee. The list goes on and on. Dozens used to answer the call as volunteer commissioners.

But little by little, the old guard moved on. Numbers dwindled. Kids didn't come back to baseball like they used to, opting instead for travel teams, different sports, or just to stay inside.

When the city took over in 2014, it inherited 35 teams participating in

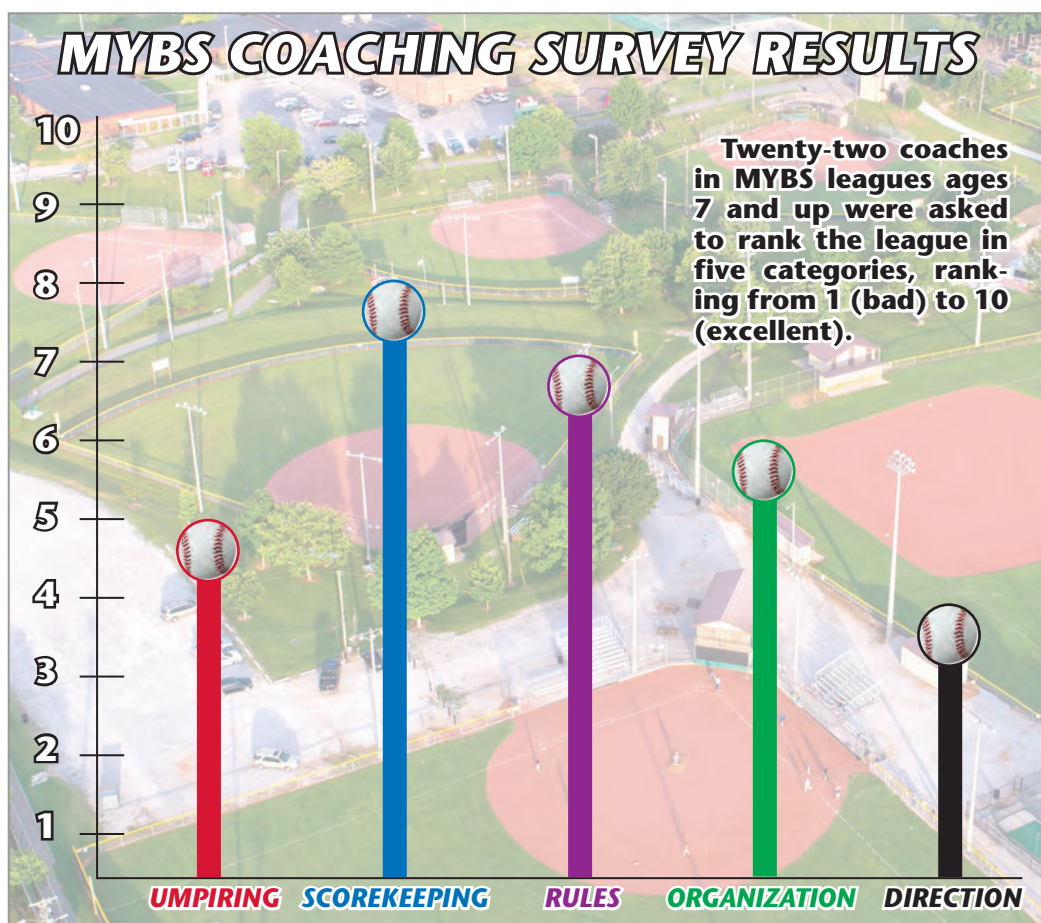


six leagues. Those numbers were down to 22 teams in five leagues this summer, which were all completed by the end of June.

Parks and Recreation athletic director Terry Beard has been organizing the leagues for the last three years. He's looked at the numbers and found it's not just locally that people are recalling the glory days.

"Baseball is declining. It's in decline across the board. We've done research. In 2002, there were 9 million kids playing baseball. By 2013, that had dropped 41 percent," said Beard. "That tells me it's not just Warren County – it's across the nation."

Continued on 2B



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