

Homegrown talent shines for Tigers

Submitted by Matt Towns

For millions of Americans, the summer sunshine means one thing: baseball. But while major league turnstiles spin and little league fields echo with the yells of youngsters, baseball fans in the Edgerton area have been visiting the quaint little ballpark in Albion for generations to see something a little different: Home Talent baseball, amateur baseball at its best.

Making their home in the idyllic setting of Albion Park, the Albion Tigers are part of the 43-team Home Talent League, the oldest and largest amateur baseball league in Wisconsin.

As the name would suggest, clubs in the Home Talent League primarily draw their players from their local communities, creating a unique connection for their players and supporters not often found at other levels of sport.

Drawing their talent almost exclusively from the successful baseball program at nearby Edgerton High School, the Tigers currently compete in the Southeast Section of the league. There are also Home Talent League ball clubs in nearby Fort Atkinson, Jefferson, Cambridge, Lake Mills, Stoughton, and Utica. The Southeast Section schedule, consisting primarily of Sunday afternoon games,



Lucas Gregory, Edgerton native and currently a pitcher at UW-Oshkosh, will join Albion in Mid-May after his senior season is complete. (Photo submitted by Matt Towns)

starts on April 29 and runs through August. In addition, Albion plays an Eastern Night League game most Thursday nights.

Built on the campus of the old Albion Academy, Albion Park is truly a unique place to spend a day in the park and catch a ball game. Without an outfield fence to obstruct their view, many fans sit under the shade trees beyond the outfield. Those who like to be closer to the action congregate nearer the infield on bleachers or lawn chairs and avail themselves of the concession stand, which serves bratwurst, hot dogs, cold drinks and other items. Indoor rest-

rooms, a playground for the kids and the overall relaxed atmosphere of the small village park add to the attraction for Tiger fans young and old.

Not-so-humble beginnings

The original Albion Tigers ball club was a semi-professional organization in the 1930s. These were some heady times for the little hamlet, as Albion was able to attract players from as far away as Madison, Milwaukee and Rockford. The farmers and merchants of Edgerton and the surrounding area were no different than most places in America at the time -- they loved and

supported their local baseball club, and the weekly games were known to draw up to 2,000 fans on a Sunday afternoon. Unfortunately, the ball club was disbanded in the early 1940s as the country turned its focus to World War II.

Long run of success

In 1946, the Albion Tigers were reborn as an amateur outfit, and a year later they joined the Home Talent League. Under the leadership and management of Albion tobacco and dairy farmer Wally Olstad, Albion established themselves as a lasting power, winning sectional championships and reaching the league's Grand Championship Series in 1953, 1957 and 1976.

The 1953 Tigers, in celebration of Edgerton's centennial, grew out their beards and went down in legend as "The Bearded Tigers" as they pounded their way to the Eastern Section championship. Many of those stars were still around (with or without their beards) in 1957 when Albion ran through the Eastern Section undefeated only to fall in the league title game 2-1 to Middleton. Wally Olstad told an Albion manager many years later that, "I had 22 ballplayers on that team. Nobody could beat us."

Wally Olstad would stay with the club until 1985, at which point long-time Tiger standout Larry

Albion Tigers 2018 Schedule

April 29	Fort Atkinson	1 p.m.
May 12	@Evansville	6 p.m.
May 20	@Jefferson	1 p.m.
May 22	@Monona - X	7 p.m.
May 27	Stoughton	1 p.m.
May 28	@Cambridge	1 p.m.
May 31	@Lake Mills	7:30 p.m.
June 3	@McFarland	4 p.m.
June 7	Waterloo	6 p.m.
June 10	Clinton	1 p.m.
June 14	Cottage Grove	6 p.m.
June 16	Tigers & The Tide	10 a.m.
June 17	@Stoughton	1 p.m.
June 21	Utica	6 p.m.
June 24	Waterloo	1p.m.
June 28	Jefferson	6 p.m.
July 1	@Lake Mills	7:30 p.m.
July 4	@Fort Atkinson	1 p.m.
July 6	Milton - X	6 p.m.
July 8	Cambridge	1 p.m.
July 12	Cambridge (@Fort Atkinson)	8 p.m.
July 15	McFarland	1 p.m.
July 19	@Fort Atkinson	7:30 p.m.
July 22	Evansville (@Racetrack Park)	2 p.m.
July 26	@Cottage Grove	7:30 p.m.
July 29	@Utica	1 p.m.
Aug. 1	@Johnson Creek - X	7:30 p.m.
Aug. 3	Home Talent League All-Star Game, Madison	
Aug. 4	Jefferson	1 p.m.
Aug. 5	ALBION PAR THREE CHALLENGE, CREEKVIEW	

RED GAMES = IN ALBION
X = EXHIBITION GAME

Buhrow took over the reins. Olstad compiled 319 wins in his 39 seasons and was named Manager of the Year twice (1976 and 1981) in addition to his three sectional champi-
onships. Wally's name still appears on the hand-operated scoreboard and a concrete memorial bench in Albion Park.

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