

# Southern Trip garners early success for Warrior baseball

By Missy Chappell

The Warrior baseball team opened their 2018 season on the road. Despite the chilly weather conditions, they came out of opening week with a 4-1 record, which is exactly where Coach Duff Hoel wants to be in March.

## Tuscola-16; ALAH-0

Tuscola opened the season at Arthur, taking on the Knights of Arthur-Lovington-Atwood-Hammond last Wednesday, March 14. Cale Sementi got the nod and the win as opening day pitcher and came away with the win in a 16-0 contest that was shortened to five innings on the mercy rule. Sementi pitched two full innings allowing no hits, giving up no walks and earning one strikeout. Logan Tabelaing also pitched two full innings of relief and Ryan Bartley came in for the final 3 outs for a combined no hitter.

Sementi came out with a 5-0 lead after two innings from hot Warrior bats. Tyler Meinhold was 3-4 with two RBIs in the win. Lucas Kresin's two hits were both homeruns (five RBIs) and Noah Pierce added a double for three RBIs.

Overall Coach Hoel was pleased with the opening day effort.

"It was nice to face some different pitching. We were really happy with our pitchers efficiency and strike throwing ability, especially on a chilly night. We played well defensively and after the first inning we were able to get the barrel of the bat on quite a few balls."

Tuscola-13; Westville-2

The following evening the Warriors traveled to Westville to face the Tigers. Once again the team walked away with a

decisive victory 13-2 in another mercy rule shortened game.

Andrew Erickson saw his first start of the season play out well. He pitched three innings, allowing four hits and 1 walk and earning six strikeouts. Erickson left the game with a 13-0 lead.

Brayden Vonlanken and Michael Ludwig pitched in relief for the Warriors, while Lucas Kresin, Will Little, and Max Wyninger saw time behind the plate.

VonLanken and Erickson each had two hits on the night with three RBIs for Erickson.

Hoel watched his team take advantage of mistakes by the Tigers to seal the win.

"We were able to get a few base hits wrapped around a walk and a few miscues by their defense to stake us to a pretty strong lead in the second. Our defense was not as sharp as it will be, but overall we are happy with our play the first two nights out. It was nice to get a couple games under our belt before a difficult weekend."

## Tuscola-9; Goreville-3

The baseball team headed south over the weekend to play against some tough competition. Their first challenge was Goreville, who under 16-year-head coach Shawn Tripp finished third in the Class 1A state last season and first place in 2016. Noah Pierce took the mound for Tuscola and according to Coach Hoel, "Noah's performance on the mound was the story of the game."

In four innings, Pierce gave up no earned runs (Goreville scored 1). He walked five batters, gave up four hits, and struck out six. Goreville would score again in the fifth off VonLanken and in the seventh off Bartley, but their three



Photos: Douglas Cottle

Warrior pitcher Cale Sementi during non-conference action with the A-L/A-H Knights. Sementi allowed no hits as the Warriors cruised to a 16-0 win.

runs weren't enough, as Tuscola came out on the winning side 9-3.

The team impressed Hoel as he stated after the game.

"We played very well defensively. We had a good approach at the plate and were able to barrel up several balls with runners on base. Goreville is very well coached and one of the top, if not the top, 1A programs in the state. Going down there and getting a win is a statement game for us this early in the season."

## Tuscola-12; Shawnee-1

Cale Sementi got his second start and win of the season Saturday afternoon versus Shawnee. Sementi

pitched 4 1/3 innings and gave up just one run on three hits while striking out seven batters. Haden Cothron came in to relieve Sementi and held Shawnee just to the one run.

On the offensive side of the ball Dalton Hoel went 3 for 5 with an RBI. Lucas Kresin and Brayden Vonlanken each hit home runs.

Coach Hoel liked what he saw from his pitchers last Saturday.

"Cale threw a real nice game for us. He was able to keep them off balance and as a result they didn't barrel up a lot of balls. Haden came in late and looked pretty good. We are anxious to get both of these guys more game time on

the mound."

## Carbondale-9; Tuscola-4

The Warriors first loss of the season came Saturday night to Carbondale. Originally the game was scheduled for Saturday morning but was pushed back to the evening by rain. The playing conditions were far less than favorable according to Hoel.

"It was a very cold evening and very difficult playing conditions, especially considering this was our third game in 24 hours. We really didn't play up to our capabilities, but we did battle back late in the game."

The Warriors scored one in the top of the first, but Carbondale put runs up in the second, third, and fourth innings to take a 9-1 lead. Tuscola put up three more in the top of the sixth but couldn't dig their way out of the 8 run deficit. Logan Tabelaing pitched four innings in the loss.

Coach Hoel gave an honest look after the game.

"We gave them too many freebies with errors, walks and wild pitches and that makes it very difficult to beat a good team. We did not have a good approach at the plate. We were facing a pitcher with more velocity than we'd seen all year, but he could not locate well early in the count. We didn't take advantage of his mistakes, and we swung at too many pitches that we were not going to hit hard. We preach having a good approach in the batter's box, and when we got down to Carbondale it seemed like

too many guys were pressing and forgot the thinking side of hitting. We will use this game as a learning tool to get better."

When looking at the first week overall, Hoel's assessment was positive.

"Overall, we were really pleased with our pitching this weekend. Other than Saturday night (in tough conditions), we really didn't throw many pitches behind the catcher. Cale Sementi is throwing well and learning to spot pitches. Noah looked real strong on Friday night against a good hitting team. Logan had looked great earlier in the week, but Saturday's conditions limited his strike to ball ratio to about 1:1, which he will typically improve upon. Defensively we were pretty good. We weren't Saturday night, but we probably understand why. I thought we swung the bats pretty well for the first weekend of the season. I think this is a team that is going to score a lot of runs, especially if they will exercise the offensive thought process we are trying to instill in them."

Looking ahead he said, "We have a tough schedule next week. We're going to find out real quick just how good we are." Tuscola will travel to St. Joe Tuesday to face the Spartans, before hosting their home opener Wednesday night against Blue Ridge. They will also host Charleston on Thursday, Cerro Gordo on Friday, and Oakwood at 10 a.m. Saturday morning.



Warrior Tyler Meinhold singles during non-conference action with the A-L/A-H Knights. The Warriors cruised to a 16-0 win.

## FOOTBALL

Continued from A1

football since he was able to grasp, and he's reached an age when his buddies will be heading to Tuscola Junior Football League practice this summer.

"And we have to tell him, 'sorry, but you'll have to watch,'" Rahn said.

And, yet, maybe not.

Rahn has found the NFL FLAG Football program that would allow Colton to participate in a sport he loves within a safe level of contact for his abilities and diagnosis. NFL FLAG is the largest flag football program in the nation and offers a non-contact football

experience for boys and girls ages 5-17. And over the past months, Colton's family has worked to educate the community and gage if there would be enough interest to begin the league this summer.

"We have a great JFL program, and we are not looking to take away anything from that program," Rahn said. "And I'm a supporter of tackle football; I played and I think it's a fantastic experience for everyone who is able. We're hoping this can give other children, including Colton, a chance to participate in this team sport. This will add another summer activity for kids."

Of course all students, including JFL players are

invited to join in the fun. A letter was sent home with North Ward students, with school administration approval, explaining the league, cost, and upcoming hurdles in starting the league.

May 1 begins the national flag football season; the Tuscola season would begin June 2. Organizers have received approval for the league-required insurance with the concession that they open the program to surrounding communities.

"Tuscola's population isn't quite large enough so we have opened the program up to Arcola and Villa Grove/Heritage students," Rahn said. Arthur-Lovington Atwood-Hammond and

Unity kids already have a flag football program.

"This will give the other neighboring kids an opportunity as well," he said.

The goal is for 100 kids to make up about 10 co-ed teams, which will be randomly assigned.

"We welcome those involved with the JFL and high school programs and coaches to be involved to make sure the kids are learning the way things will be at the next level," Rahn said. "There is no blocking or tackling. It is focused on learning the skills positions while working on footwork, plays, running routes, timing, teamwork, and sportsmanship. The biggest difference in the rules

is there are no returns on a fumble recovery. The ball is down so there are no kids diving on the ball."

The NFL program was the top pick for the Tuscola kids for a number of reasons.

"When looking at the significant cost to create a program 100 percent from scratch was high, so this seemed like the better route to go," Rahn said. "There is training for the coaches that isn't just about the X's and O's, it's about safety protocol and health awareness. The cost of insurance covers a full year, so in the future, pending popularity we could look at having two seasons."

The registration fee will include a reversible jersey for

each team which will feature NFL teams. Within the NFL Flag football program there are regional tournaments at NFL facilities with an opportunity to play in a tournament at the Pro Bowl.

Organizers have compiled an online Amazon wish list that includes equipment and supplies.

"That includes items such as pylons needed to give these kids the most realistic football experience possible," Rahn added.

For more information find the group on Facebook by searching Tuscola Flag Football League. Questions can be directed to Rahn by email at TuscolaFlag@yahoo.com.

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## AROUND the Halls

By Caleigh Parsley

Tuesday, March 13

TCHS SADD had the month-

ly meeting continuing to plan April/May "Is It Worth the Risk?" campaign. Also, we're joining with the Douglas County Health Department working with Summer Phillips. Wednesday, March 21 is the National #kickbutts campaign where students will be signing a pledge to be tobacco free and there will be giveaways for signing it. SADD is also sponsoring a paper supply drive for Douglas County Health Department's summer program. You

can turn the following items into the office by Friday, March 23: paper towels, paper plates, disposable bowls, plastic silverware, 6 oz. cups, bleach wipes, and black garbage bags.

Wednesday, March 14 was FCCLA's monthly Chapter Meeting explaining officer applications for the 2018-2019 school year and senior scholarships due April 20. Our next big event is FCCLA State in April - seven members have been earned the

opportunity to go.

Saturday, March 17 Tuscola FFA Alumni hosted the annual Chili Supper and Pie Auction Fundraiser at the community building with help from FFA members.

There was also a musical performance by Sydney Hoel and Connor Baer singing songs from this year's musical "The Sound of Music." This was the best chili dinner and pie auction yet; thank you so much to all those that helped and came!