

MSR will cover venerable Iowa Valley League

Written by Jim Ecker
Friday, 27 May 2016 05:17



I have great news to share with you today, especially if you love baseball and cherish the small towns that have nourished the sport for a long, long time in Eastern Iowa.

The Metro Sports Report will be offering extensive coverage this spring and summer of the Iowa Valley League, a baseball tradition in nearby towns that traces its roots all the way back to 1935.

Norway, Watkins, Fairfax, Walford, Williamsburg and Red Top are in the league again this season. The campaign begins Sunday and runs through July 31, followed by the annual IABA state tournament that lasts two weeks in August.

The Metro Sports Report will cover one doubleheader each week, starting this Sunday between Norway and Red Top at Red Top's home base in Solon at 1 p.m. Norway has been a traditional power in the league, but Red Top has captured the last five league titles and appears to have another strong team.

All of the twin-bills are scheduled for Sundays, except for the annual holiday doubleheader between Norway and Watkins which will be played this year on Saturday night, July 9 at Watkins.

The Iowa Valley League features a long list of current and former college baseball players, many of them from the greater Metro area itself, along with a sprinkling of former minor leaguers and even a few talented high school players. Some of the players in the IVL have been playing in the league for more than 10 years and still look forward to putting on the uniform and testing their skills.

The Iowa Valley League is sometimes referred to as a "semi-pro" league, but that's a misnomer. Nobody gets paid to play in this league, and all former minor leaguers have to be officially retired from pro ball to compete.

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The Metro Sports Report coverage of the Iowa Valley League is being made possible by generous advertising support from the Sadler family, which runs the Sadler Power Train and Sadler Machine companies in southwest

Cedar Rapids. Adam Sadler, in fact, is the manager of Red Top and is the person who brought the Metro Sports Report and the Iowa Valley League together this year.

In the interest of full disclosure, I was the general manager and head coach of the Cedar Rapids Cougars, which played in the Iowa Valley League from 2002 through 2008. We had a great time in the IVL and made some terrific friends, so it will be a special treat this Sunday when I take my lawn chair to Solon and watch Red Top battle the Norway Bandits.

Margaret O'Banion, our ace photographer, will be attending the games this season as we tour the league. We'll be looking for good feature stories, as always, and we'll also provide the weekly schedule and updated standings.

In addition to our featured doubleheader each week, we'll have stories about the two other doubleheaders that are played each Sunday, thanks to reports from IVL secretary Mike Gibney. We'll move around from week to week, looking for good games and good stories and trying to treat all of the clubs as fairly as possible.

This Sunday's schedule also features Fairfax at Walford and Williamsburg at Watkins, with both doubleheaders at 1 p.m.

We've listed all of the opening-day rosters at the end of this story for your enjoyment. If you've followed baseball in Eastern Iowa, you'll certainly recognize many of the names.

We invited you to come along for the ride and we'll see you at the ballpark.

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SUNDAY, MAY 29

Williamsburg at Watkins, 1
Fairfax at Walford, 1
Norway at Red Top (Solon), 1

NORWAY

Mike Andries, Ron Benich, Taylor Brecht, Dustin Carlson, Brady Corson, Luke Crimmins, Ben Keeney, Scott Keeney, Ean McNeal, Travis Mueller, Zach Patterson, Randy Perez, Robert Primrose, Dave Schenk, Tony Solato, JT Sole, Christian Stekl, Luis Sterling, Nick Stimson, Kellen Sweeney, Mitch Walser.

WALFORD

Levi Montague, Jake Stenberg, Jordan Kearns, Tanner Unkel, Ryan Kemp, Ty Mouglin, Tyler Butz, Brennan Hammer, Logan Holtz, Josh Crosby, Shane Chafa, Taylor Gilson, Parker Bolt, Corbin Woods, Austin Stroschein, Gavin Naderman, Blake Mahoney, Bryce Grimm, Colt Janssen, Tony Stenberg, Austin Groth, Andrew Walker.

FAIRFAX

David Yancey, Cody Bell, Cody Williams, Jimmy Lizarraga, Adam Lloyd, Ben Milks, Ben Koering, Colton Jourdan, Matt Stevens, Ben Sass, Lucas Larson, Spencer Hunt, Todd Oberthien, Adam Stolley, Sam Hunter, Ben Larson, Christian Knox, Tony Maiers, Alex Hayden, Zach Daniels, Sammy Lizarraga, Blake Hargens.

RED TOP

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Casey Pauli, Tyler Howe, Jordan Howe, Billy Kass, Ben Rettenmeier, Aaron Sauegling, Reid Bonner, Nick Day, Corbin Day, Austin Christensen, Tyler Rahmatulla, Ben Weeks, Ryan Rumpf, Colin Krieter, Taylor Zeutenhorst, Cale Henke, Brady Cotton, Brandon Schulista, Anthony Gagliardi, Drew Yanecek, Trey Beckman.

WILLIAMSBURG

Adam Berte, Ryan Arp, Jacob Redman, Chris Handke, Joe Anton, A.J. Liddell, Kyle Ferree, Mike Hackett, Mike Haring, Jake Frakes, Travis Bowman, Jake Holub, Garrett Saunders, Sam Crawford, Colton Knox, Kevin Delaney, Cam Frazier, Brent Parker, Jack Rasmussen, Nolan Arp, Nike Supple, Noah Heitshusen.

WATKINS

Luke Franzenburg, Danny Bales, Jake Jarbo, Jonny Frese, Karson Kuester, Brady Stramer, D.J. Utley, Jack Strellner, Phil Keppler, Addison Johnson, Evan Boddicker, Nick Brown, Conor Frese, Jake Thoman, Austin McFarland, Jesus Carrera, Mitch Stickney, Tyler Peyton, Cale Jameson, Keaton Winn, Cal Clark.