

BIG HITTER - Chuck Whitehead started off the Little League season in style, banging out three hits in the Phillies win over the Cardinals. Two of them were nearly out of the park. PHOTO BY RON BARTIZEK



PLAY BALL! - Larry Lettie, president of Back Mountain Baseball, announced the official opening of the 1994 Little League season Saturday. PHOTO BY SOL BARKET

Mounts off to strong start

By DAVE KONOPKI
Sports Writer

Although they've yet to reach even the midway point of the season Jack Wolensky knows this is a very important week for the Dallas High School baseball team.

In fact, by week's end, the Mountaineer head coach and the rest of the Wyoming Valley Conference will know if the Mountaineers fall into the category of contenders or pretenders.

Despite entering the 1994 season with the youngest team in his 13 years at Dallas, Wolensky has seen his squad gain experience — and victories — at a rapid pace during the first two weeks of the season.

As of Tuesday, the Mounts found themselves with a 5-2 record and among the top teams of the WVC Class AAA division, riding the strong pitching of sophomore Jeff Kunkle, who has won all four of his starts. Only Coughlin and Wyoming Valley West, with records of 5-1, are ahead of Dallas in the standings, but it was the Mounts who dealt the Crusaders and Spartans their only setbacks.

"We're pleased with the start of our season," said Wolensky. "I think we were 2-4 at this point in the season last year and that was a more veteran team. The attitude of the kids has been great and they've been working hard."

Wolensky knows this is a key week of action for the Mountaineers. They started the week with a 4-3 win against Nanticoke and must play perennial powers Tunkhannock and Hazleton before this week comes to a close.

"This is a very big week for us," said the veteran head coach, himself a former baseball standout at Dallas. "Last year, we only won one of these games during this week (the WVC Class AAA teams are playing the same schedule as last season). By the end of the week, we should have a pretty good picture of the kind of team we have and how we should do this season."

Kunkle, who started for the Mountaineers last year as a freshman, has been outstanding in his first four pitching starts. In addition to his perfect 4-0 record, the sophomore has posted a microscopic 0.68 ERA, striking out 28 batters and walking just six in 27 innings.

Kunkle started the season with an impressive 3-1 win over Valley West, twirling a two-hitter and followed that performance with equally dominant wins against Coughlin (2-1, four hitter), Berwick (13-3, two hitter) and Wyoming Area (9-3, two hitter).

"Jeff has done a great job," said Wolensky, of his pitching ace. "He's done a lot of maturing and we couldn't be more pleased with his progress. The key has been his control, it's just incredible. He's a very level-headed kid and a great person both athletically and academically."

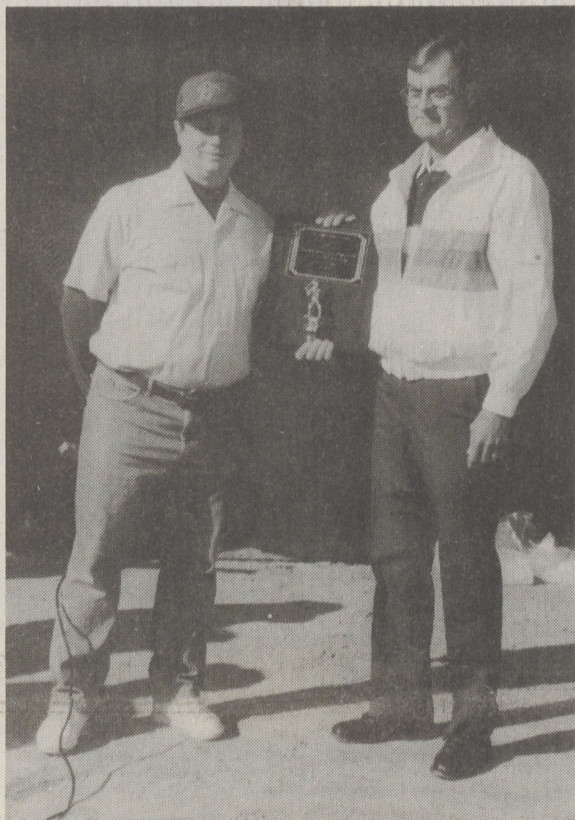
Although he's been a standout on the baseball field since his Little League days and his success should come as a surprise to no one, Kunkle's success and demeanor on the mound has drawn comparisons between himself and another former Dallas standout - Mark Konopki.

"I've had a lot of other coaches tell me that Jeff reminds me of Mark," said Wolensky. Konopki, a 1986 graduate of Dallas, jumped out to a 10-0 record as a junior under Wolensky and later gained All-American status in college before a four-year professional career in the Boston Red Sox organization. "Jeff reminds me a lot of Mark in terms of control and composure on the mound. It's rare for a sophomore to come in and dominate like Jeff has done so far this season." But I keep telling the players not to let up when he pitches. We can't expect him to go out there and dominate every time he pitches."

The Dallas coach also had praise for assistant coach Scott Francis, who has been working

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PHOTOS BY SOL BARKET
SERVICE AWARDS - In left photo, Dave Katyl, left, umpire-in-chief, presents the Chief Ed Lyons award to Tom Shone for his 17 years service to Back Mountain Baseball. Right photo, Kevin Stolarczyk, left, presents the W.W. "Bill" Kubis Award for outstanding sponsorship to Paul Nicholson, manager of Mellon Bank's Dallas office.



Little League opens '94 season

By DAVE KONOPKI
Sports Writer

Play ball!!!!
For the 43rd consecutive year, those words echoed throughout the communities of the Back Mountain as the 1994 Little League season officially got underway Saturday with opening ceremonies at the W.W. Kubis Memorial field.

The league had reason to celebrate on Opening Day as the boys' Major League District 16 champions, girls' Big League Pennsylvania State Champions and boys' Junior League District 16 champions were honored. Each of the teams won their respective titles during the 1993 season.

"With the hard work of league volunteers, managers, coaches, parents, the players, and the board of directors, 1993 was a very successful year for Back Mountain Baseball," said league president Larry Lettie, who is in his fifth year as league prexy. "We want to teach the kids in both the baseball and softball programs the fundamentals of the game, about sportsmanship and about character. I would think, and hope, that the baseball and softball programs at Dallas and Lake-Lehman High Schools benefit from our organization."

Little League baseball began in the Back Mountain in 1951 and, coupled with Little League softball, is the oldest and one of the largest youth sports organizations in the Back Mountain. From its modest beginnings, Back Mountain Baseball Inc. (formerly Back Mountain Little League) has grown become one of the largest leagues in Pennsylvania.

This season, nearly 1,000 boys and girls will compete under the umbrella of Back Mountain Baseball, Inc. in both baseball and softball. The baseball program currently serves boys ages 6-15 from tee-ball through Senior League. There are 14 major league baseball teams, forming two separate leagues (Back Mountain American and Back Mountain National). There are also 20 minor league teams, from the A to AAA levels of play.

In addition to the major and minor league baseball teams, there are also six tee-ball teams in the 6-year-old division and another eight teams in the 7-8 year old division. Also in baseball, there are six teams in the Junior League (age 13) and another six teams in the Senior League program (ages 14-15).

The softball program serves all girls between the ages of 8-18. In addition to the Little League programs, there are also Junior, Senior and Big League programs.

In softball, there are four teams in the minor league division and another six teams in the major league program. The softball major league program plays inter-league games with the Harveys Lake and Bob Horlacher Little Leagues while the minor league plays inter-league games with Harveys Lake.

All told, there are more than 70 teams playing baseball and softball in Back Mountain Baseball, Inc.

Each week, the Dallas Post, in cooperation with Back Mountain Baseball, Inc. will publish the results of games in the major league baseball and softball programs.

Because of the number of games played, the major league baseball teams began play one week prior to Opening Day ceremonies.

GIANTS 14 - ASTROS 5

Joel Whipple picked up the win, striking out 11 in going the distance. J.B. Bucha and Tom Byron led the Giants with three hits, including a pair of doubles by Byron. Whipple added two hits, including a double.

J. Rhodes and Matt Harrison had the lone hits for the Astros, each getting a single.

PHILLIES 7 - PIRATES 1

Three Phillie pitchers combined on a one-hitter to lift the Phils over the Pirates. Chuck Whitehead picked up the win, striking out seven in three-plus innings while Ryan Sorber struck out five of the six batters he faced. Whitehead had a pair of hits for the Phillies while Adam Pelak had the lone hit for the Pirates, a clean single in the fourth inning.

Baseball standings

AMERICAN LEAGUE

Rangers	2-0
A's	1-1
Indians	1-1
Orioles	1-1
Tigers	1-1
Red Sox	0-2
Pirates	0-2

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Dodgers	2-0
Giants	2-0
Phillies	2-0
Reds	2-0
Astros	0-2
Cardinals	0-2
Pirates	0-2

Last Week's Scores:

Dodgers 9 - Tigers 5
Giants 14 - Astros 5
Phillies 7 - Pirates 1
A's 10 - Red Sox 7
Rangers 22 - Indians 1
Giants 22 - Red Sox 7
Reds 6 - Cardinals 2
Orioles 10 - Yankees 3
Phillies 14 - Cardinals 1
Tigers 12 - A's 4
Reds 10 - Pirates 8
Indians 8 - Yankees 7
Rangers 25 - Orioles 3
Dodgers 11 - Astros 8

REDS 6 - CARDINALS 2

Winning pitcher Justin Bicking and Jonathan Habrack combined to strike out 12 batters as the Reds beat the Cards. Habrack blasted a two-run home run in the third inning while Bicking added a pair of triples. David Jumper also had two hits for the Reds.

The Cardinals' Dominic Castriano followed Habrack's blast with a home run of his own in the third inning, a solo shot to center. Nick Harris added a double for the Cardinals.

INDIANS 8 - YANKEES 7

The Indians came back from a 6-0 deficit to score the winning run in the bottom of the sixth to beat the Yanks. David Martin had two hits for the Indians and scored the game winner with no outs in the sixth. Paul Hiller added a double for the winners.

Brad Feleccia led the Yankees offense with two hits, including a

double and triple. Steve Feder-spiel also had two hits for the Yankees, a pair of singles.

RANGERS 22 - INDIANS 1

Matt Wycallis, Brian Vetter, Tim Faneck and Frank Martino each had two hits to lead the Rangers to an easy win. Wycallis picked up the mound win, allowing just one hit over three innings.

Paul Hiller and Kevin Piekara had the lone hits for the Indians with a single apiece.

GIANTS 22 - RED SOX 7

Mike Domzalski belted out four hits while teammates Tom Byron, Joel Whipple, Mike Bayer and Jim Belles added three apiece to pace the Giants over the Sox. Mike Barlow added a triple for the Giants while Byron picked up the mound win, striking out five in four innings.

Brett Larson, John Lukasavage and Andrew Lohin each had two hits apiece for the Red Sox.

PHILLIES 14 - CARDINALS 1

Ryan Sorber pitched four innings and recorded all 12 outs himself to lift the Phillies. Sorber allowed just one hit, striking out 11 and catching an infield pop-up. Chuck Whitehead had three hits for the Phillies, including a double while Joel Lesinski had two hits and Josh Lesinski added a double.

Dominic Castriano had the lone hit against Sorber, a single in the third inning. Steve Liparella and Nick Harris had singles for the Cardinals.

ORIOLES 10 - YANKEES 3

Pat Barnard hit and pitched the Orioles over the Yankees. Barnard led a balanced Oriole offense, with two hits, including a double while the Yankees were led by a triple by Robbie Werner and two hits from Kevin Yurko.

RANGERS 25 - ORIOLES 3

Brothers Mike and Tim Faneck combined for nine hits and Mike picked up the mound win to lead the Rangers. Mike, who had five hits, struck out four in three innings. Matt Wycallis had three hits while teammates Nate Hoffman, Darrell Evans and Dennis Brown had two hits apiece.

The Orioles had four hits, including three off the bat of Chris Wilt. Ed Krasniak had the other Oriole hit, a double.

Pitchers leading Knights to wins

By DAVE KONOPKI
Sports Writer

Perhaps the success their program has enjoyed over the years has raised their expectations.

Or perhaps, it's the fact they've been there before.

Or perhaps, they're saving their biggest celebration until the end of the season.

Whatever the reason, the Lake-Lehman High School baseball team has vaulted into first place in the Wyoming Valley Conference Class AA West Division without an elaborate show of emotions. Without wild celebrations. And without the fanfare that normally rides the coattails of success.

And, boy, they've had reasons to celebrate.

The Knights have won their first six games of the season in impressive fashion, posting a 5-0 record and quickly jumping out to a 2 1/2 game lead over second-place Northwest (3-2). They've seen a senior pitcher twirl a perfect game in the season opener and a freshman pitcher post two impressive wins against traditionally tough opponents.

Still, they've been playing, and winning, their games in a businesslike manner.

"Personally, sometimes I wish they would be a little more emotional," said head coach Dwight Barbacci, a self-described "emotional person". "I tell them all the time that baseball is a game of emotions and try to get them emotionally charged up for the game. But that's their personality and they've been playing very good baseball. I can't argue with that."

Senior righthander Ernie Chamberlain got the Black Knights off to a fast start in the season opener, tossing a perfect game against Bishop Hafey. The third-year starter struck out 10

batters while not allowing a Hafey player to reach base.

"It was a great way to start the season," said Barbacci, of Chamberlain's gem. "Ernie's curveball has been working well and he's spotting his fastball. He's worked very hard to get into this position."

A trio of Black Knight pitchers each have 2-0 mound records this season. Joining Chamberlain are senior Larry Smith and freshman Geoff Engle. Engle picked up wins in impressive relief appearances against Bishop Hoban and Northwest.

The play of catcher Brad Patton has been nothing short of sensational. Patton, a transfer from Berwick High School, has quickly become one of the team leaders. "He's doing a very good job behind the plate," said the veteran Lehman coach. "He's a leader and he's smart back there. He knows how to set up behind the plate and he always lets the cutoff people know where to play."

Offensively the Knights have been ripping the baseball, scoring double digits in nearly every contest, including a 23 run performance against Wyoming Seminary. Senior Will Woronko has been a steady offensive performer for the Knights while Chamberlain has been on fire recently, getting 14 hits in his last 16 at-bats. Patton and sophomore John Oliver have also been hitting the ball well for the Knights.

Despite the great start by his team, Barbacci knows the Knights can't set the ship on automatic pilot. Recent history and lofty team goals set before the season began should prevent that from happening.

Last year, playing the same schedule as this season, the Knights jumped out to a 5-0 start before losing to Hanover, Meyers

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