

BASEBALL

# New shine on old diamond

Youth league refreshed in Geneva

BY COREY MEINTS | cmeints@iafalls.com

Now that the Butler Grundy County Youth League (BG-CYL) and tournaments have come to a close for the summer, plans are underway to continue to improve. Especially in Geneva where things have already improved over the recent past.

Adam Clark, Geneva Coordinator, said the physical changes to the Geneva diamond include lighting and sponsorship along with general field improvements. A second diamond is currently in the works. All of it to make a more enjoyable summer season for players and fans.

The season starts the final week of May. With feedback from parents, many of whom volunteer as coaches, Clark said there was another recent change to the structure of the league.

"They would like to see more competitive baseball and softball played with more games, tournaments, etcetera," Clark said. "We've met that with increasing the schedule from the standard 10-12 games within the BGCL to roughly 22 games and at least two tournaments - a new one that Geneva is hosting, and another that we will find around the area. Within the league, each team plays the 12 games. Outside of the league, the sky is the limit. The explosion of travel ball has opened the door for kids to be more involved, making tournaments and additional scheduled games possible without the cost of what a typical travel team will ask for."

Home games are played in Geneva, with scheduled league games home and away at Iowa Falls, Dike, Aplington-Parkersburg, Eldora, Gladbrook-Reinbeck, Clarion and BCLUW this season.

Clark said the main goal of Geneva Little League and the BGCYL is to develop baseball and softball players at home. He said the BGCYL has rules and guidelines in place to ensure that all players of any skill level are playing consistently, which is great for all players. But, the league is constantly addressing the changes in the game and the various opportunities for players.

"First and foremost, the purpose of the Geneva Little League is the development of the entire communities ball players," Clark said. "The games that we will play outside of the BGCYL will have more of a 'travel' feel to them with those games being played very competitively and with



PHOTOS BY COREY MEINTS / TIMES CITIZEN

One big improvement at the Geneva diamond has been lighting over the recent years. Sponsorship, shown on the fence, has helped with that and other things.



Adam Clark, Geneva Ball Coordinator, chalks in the batter's box before a game. He has helped usher in an age of growth and improvement at the diamond.

the current USSSA rules in place. Parents who've joined our league recently have been searching for this and have been leaving our community to find this level of baseball and softball which we are now proud to offer in Geneva."

Clark said all coaches of the Geneva teams will continue to preach core values both to the kids and to the parents of those kids. Playing time is and will always be determined on two major factors - attitude and effort.

"From there we preach the 'Geneva Family' which is that we are a family, we are supportive, we are positive, we show each other that we care across all levels with our teammates, our coaches, our parents, our umpires, and within our community," Clark said. "Our coaches volunteer their time, our parents volunteer their children, our concession workers volunteer their time, often times our umpires are high school students. It really is a community lead effort to ensure a great baseball and softball season."

The fact that the players, parents, coaches and community give so much time, effort and money to the program proves that they are doing something right. While learning and playing are done on the diamond, Clark said the work that has been and continues to be done around that field means those lessons are supported. Recent additions and improvements show that there's another 70-something years of gamedays ahead.

"This year we have a couple of big ticket items," Clark said. "We added a temporary pitching mound which most of the towns we play in have had for years and we've always been slightly disadvantaged, new bleachers for the rightfield and leftfield lines, and we've buried in electric to our scoreboard in centerfield."

Clark said all of the work done at the Geneva diamond has been possible through volunteers and donations.

"Our coaches, along with Kent and Cindy Horner, have done a tremendous job reaching out to members of all communities and business owners within the community to ask for donations," Clark said. "For years, Kent and Cindy - along with coordinators past and present - have put a lot of work into the field and the number of compliments we've received from all visiting patrons, coaches, and players has been overwhelming. Everyone enjoys a game in Geneva. It has a historic feel to it with some modern updates. I've been awfully lucky to inherit the league coordinator position. None of what we do in Geneva could be done without the community through their support." ■

SH SOFTBALL



MARISSA VANWINGEN / TIMES CITIZEN

The South Hardin softball team had plenty to celebrate this summer. The Tigers won 27 games, took the NICL-West crown, made it one step from the State Tournament and had six individuals named to the All-Conference list. Head coach Becky Rosonke was also named league coach of the year.

## Six recognized for league champs

BY MARISSA VANWINGEN  
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The first three years under Becky Rosonke, South Hardin finished with a combined 11-51 record. Since 2021, the Tigers have had a resurgence.

This summer, SH produced its third 20-plus win season in a row, advanced to the Class 2A Region Final for the second time in two years and were crowned NICL-West champions for the second time in that amount of time. The only

thing missing from their resume is a State appearance. The last time Eldora-New Providence punched their ticket to Fort Dodge was 2000.

"The season is always a success if you are lucky enough to make it to the Regional Final," said Tiger head coach Becky Rosonke. "Going 27-8 and having our third straight 20-win season feels amazing."

SH set 17 individual marks and four team (hits, runs, doubles, wins) records this summer. A major cog to the resurgence has been the junior and senior classes.

Senior Ellie Anderson was one of the first eighth graders brought up by Ro-

sonke and was the only one to stick it out all five years. She started in the outfield and then moved to third base her final two years. During her sophomore season, E. Anderson's bat picked up and she led the team in RBIs. Last year, she was second on the team in many offensive categories. This summer, she hit 383 with 41 knocks, 12 doubles and a home run. As the clean-up hitter, she tied with Hailey Rosonke for most RBIs in a season (46).

The Tiger third baseman will have her name on the school record book, breaking the career batting average (.378), slugging percentage (.523) and RBIs in a season.

The NICL-West coaches recognized all that she brought to the field and selected her as a first team, unanimous selection.

SH also graduates Payton Strutz. She played varsity for three years, manning first the last two seasons. Her junior year she had 148 put outs and six errors. This summer, she had 243 put outs, just four errors (.985 percent) and broke the career fielding percentage record (.975). She was an honorable mention.

"I will miss their talent and heart on the field, but I will miss their presence in the dugout the most," said Coach Rosonke.

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