

STEVE
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Road to success often begins at the Kinlock

There's certainly a lot of youth baseball action still going on among the city's teams.

The Senior Babe Ruth team is playing in the 16-18 New England Regional in New Hampshire, the 14- and 15-year-old Babe Ruth All-Star teams will play in state championship games Friday (both delayed a day due to rain) and the Norwalk Legion Post 12 will take part in the Senior Legion State Tournament with a game Sunday.

And we shouldn't forget the annual tournament held right here in Norwalk among the youth league teams that serves as a springboard to all those successful youth teams and that's the 33rd edition of the David Kinlock Memorial Tournament.

The tournament begins next Friday with five teams, Cranbury East and West, Babe Spinola, West Norwalk Cal Ripken and Ben Whone, vying for city bragging rights with all the games being played at Veteran's Park. It provides a unique opportunity for those programs to continue playing this summer, especially close to home.

I can recall when many of the players on the Norwalk Babe Ruth All-Star teams played in the Kinlock Tournament several years back. Even though some of the youth league teams they played on may not have been as successful as they wanted, with the exception of some of the Cranbury and Cal Ripken teams that excelled in the past, they still had the opportunity to get on the field to play for something.

Not a lot of cities or towns in Connecticut offer that chance to play in a citywide, summer tournament such as the Kinlock. Norwalk is lucky to have a tournament that offers a competition which can only help the players progress and develop skills as they move up the ladder.

You know the kids who play in the Kinlock have a great love for the game and to see where they started and where they are now, playing for state and often times regional championships, it makes you feel good. You've seen them grow and mature into fine young ballplayers who are gamers.

From what I've learned, the key to success in the Kinlock is having depth. With everything that goes on during the summer, from family vacations to football practice starting, it's good to have the kids who come to play and are versatile.

Many coaches have to make do with the hand they're dealt, however, so they do the best they can with the players they have in the fold. Many players get the chance to play positions they've never played in the past so that in itself can be a benefit.

The one thing I've learned from covering the Kinlock Tournament in the past is it's very competitive yet still fun at the same time. I've always enjoyed covering the tournament because each team wants to win badly. It's like trying to beat your brother in a game of one-on-one but at the end of the day, you go out and get ice cream together.

But when the smoke clears, the best team that excels in all areas the majority of the tournament will finish with the best record in the field. Good luck to all the teams.

And the fifth annual Tom Corbo Tournament, which also starts next week and is being played at Veteran's Park, can be a benefit to the younger kids as well. It's fun to see the youngsters in the Corbo Tournament learn how to play the game. Of course they make their share of mistakes but when they succeed at making a play, it's quite a sight to see.

So for those who want to see the youth baseball stars of tomorrow today, check out the Kinlock and Corbo tournaments next week.

Norwalk Senior BR stars win opener

Norwalk stormed past the Vermont entry as play began at Franklin Pierce College

The Norwalk Senior Babe Ruth all-stars scored early and often on their way to a rain-soaked, but impressive 10-2 win over Barre, Vt., Wednesday morning in the opening round of the New England regional tournament at Franklin Pierce College in Rindge, N.H.

The Norwalkers, who improved to a perfect 5-0 in all-star competition, will return to action at 4 p.m. today, weather permitting, when they will face the winner of

NEW ENGLAND REGIONALS

Norwalk	10
Barre (Vt.)	2

Wednesday's second game between Rhode Island and New Hampshire.

"It was a big relief to win that first game," head coach Ron DelBene said. "That definitely took a lot of pressure off the coaches and pressure off the kids.

"But (today) will be a tough task," he added. "We have to play one of the Rhode Island or New Hampshire teams and from what we saw of them before we left the field they're both pretty good. So it will be a tough task for our boys."

Of course, both of those teams had to be impressed with what they saw from Norwalk. Mike Andino, who won both his starts in the state tournament, pitched a seven-inning complete-game three-hitter, striking out five and issuing no walks, as he raised his all-star record to 3-0.

"Michael had them totally off stride," DelBene said. "Vermont was a fastball-hitting team, but his slow curve and change of speeds gave them fits. Even the Vermont coach said after the game he hasn't seen anyone pitch against them like that.

"Mike is a very smart pitcher and he knows when to throw certain pitches and when to change speeds. They were off stride all game and didn't know what to do."

Meanwhile, Norwalk continued its hot hitting, rapping off 10 hits,

including three by Kenny O'Brien, who doubled, singled twice, and drove in three runs. Jon Barbarula and Chris Hines each added a pair of hits and knocked in two runs apiece. One of Hines' hits was a triple, while Barbarula had a double.

Brian Jacoby also fueled the local attack with a two-run homer and three RBIs, while Corey DelBene added a single and an RBI with a sacrifice fly. Andrew Hines rounded out the hit parade with an RBI single.

Not to be outdone, the Norwalk defense also turned in a stellar performance, led by third baseman Taso Petrides.

"He made two or three really nice plays over there," DelBene said. "Everyone played well under

see NORWALK B4



New York Giants head coach Tom Coughlin makes a point while speaking to reporters Wednesday at the University of Albany. The defending Super Bowl champions open their training camp today in Alabny.

AP photo

'Team' is key for champions

Head coach Tom Coughlin says the Giants will be equal to the challenge facing the defending Super Bowl champs

ALBANY, N.Y.
TOM CANAVAN
Associated Press

Two days after the Super Bowl champions traded disgruntled four-time Pro Bowl tight end Jeremy Shockey, Giants coach Tom Coughlin kicked off training camp on Wednesday by stressing the importance of the team over the individual.

"I think what my position will

be and what I think the team will be ready to accept is the fact that the reason we won was because of team," Coughlin said a day before players reported to the University of Albany. "Team over self was why we won."

Coughlin believes the team mantra played into Shockey's desire to leave the organization after six productive years, ending up with the New Orleans Saints.

"I think that with the quality of the individuals that we have, the character of our team, that they certainly are going to realize that the attitude about believing in one another, about supporting one another, about the idea of taking the names off the back of the jerseys, that is what served us best last year," Coughlin said.

In other areas, Coughlin said: — The Giants are ready for the challenge of being targeted this

season. — Receiver David Tyree, whose phenomenal catch led to the game-winning touchdown in the Super Bowl — is not close to being ready to go following offseason knee surgery.

— The team hopes no action will be taken by the NFL against running back Ahmad Bradshaw, who was jailed for a month this summer on an old probation violation.

Coughlin spent most of the opening minutes of his news conference talking about Shockey, who missed the playoffs with a broken leg and then complained about his role in the offense in the weeks after the stunning upset of the New England Patriots.

"Jeremy Shockey is an excellent football player," Coughlin said. "He is an individual who loved the game, loved to play the

see 'TEAM' B4

Yankees roll past Twins

Mike Mussina went eight innngs as New York scored its 10th straight home victory

NEWYORK
HOWIE RUMBERG
Associated Press

Mike Mussina entered this season almost an afterthought in the Yankees' rotation, the old man on a staff of budding stars. What a difference four months makes.

Mussina walked off the Yankee Stadium mound Wednesday to rousing "Moosel!" calls from the sold-out crowd, having thrown eight economical innings in New York's 5-1 win over the Minnesota Twins for their 10th straight home victory.

Last year "I physically couldn't do what I wanted to do. The whole year was miserable," Mussina said after giving up six hits without allowing a run.

"Today was probably a good day," he said with a smirk.

Alex Rodriguez and Justin Christian each had two-run doubles and Richie Sexson had a sacrifice fly and 11 putouts and three assists at first base as the Yankees completed a 6-0, post-break homestand with sweeps of Oakland and the Twins.

"It starts with starting pitching, defense and timely hitting, and we're getting all those now," Rodriguez said.

The Yankees will try to continue the stellar play on the road, taking their mediocre 23-23 road record into Fenway Park in Boston for three games starting Friday.

The Twins did not get a runner past second base against Mussina (13-6) in losing their fourth straight game and dropping 2 1/2 games back of the White Sox in the AL Central.

"It was a disappointing ballgame. I don't know how to describe it," Twins manager Ron Gardenhire said. "Our trip here was not very good. We played terrible baseball pretty much all the way through it."

see YANKEES B4

Zoomers carry winning streak into U10 regional play

The Norwalk Zoomers finished their regular season in the FCSL with an 11-2 record and are poised for the Babe Ruth Softball U-10 Regionals, which open Friday in Stamford.

The Zoomers are scheduled to open regional play at noon Friday. Norwalk closed out the regular season by beating New Fairfield twice, 13-1 and 16-2, and Westport, 9-4.

Against New Fairfield, Amy Hurd led the offense with a single, two doubles and a triple. Rebecca Stefanatos, Kyle

BABE RUTH SOFTBALL

Courtney, Isabelle Genovese, Ryan Lajoie and Nicole Chandler all had multiple hits on the day.

In the Westport game, the Zoomers jumped out to a four-run lead in the first inning and never looked back.

Erin Frederick, Nicole Bonanni and Mallory Rocherfort had two hits apiece. Alyssa Brown, Genovese, Chandler and Hurd chipped all had singles in the game.

Riptide rises to 12-2

The Norwalk Riptide U-14 girls softball team finished its regular season with a 12-2 record after recording victories over Ridgefield, 4-0, Westport, 9-5, and Redding, 14-4.

In the Ridgefield game, Elizabeth Seiden had two hits; Christina Chironna, Brittany Lowden, and Sam Bardos all had key hits, and Maggie Fallon laced a triple to bring in the final run.

Against Westport, Morgan Delbene collected three hits; Chironna and Lauren Hurd both

had doubles and singles; Jessica Whitman added a triple, and Rebecca Pisano had two hits.

Jessica Stamatis was on the mound and got the win.

In the Redding game, Rebecca Pisano pounded out four hits and collected five RBI. Lauren Hurd added three hits and Jessica Whitman had two hits and three RBI to account for most of the Riptide offense.

The Riptide will now participate in the year-end tournament in Bethel beginning with pool play today.