

McMahon nips Norwalk

From B1

hits with three strikeouts. Senior ace Rocco Cundari earned his third save of the season, pitching a tidy scoreless seventh inning.

"It's definitely nice pitching with runs on the board," said Coppola, who also went 1-for-3 with two runs scored. "You know if you give up a run, you don't have to worry about it."

Coppola is most known for his play as a middle infielder, but is quietly putting together a nice season on the mound, improving to 4-0.

"Kenny's been solid all year," McMahon head coach John Cross said. "He's a great ballplayer, and he did a great job. Especially in a game like this against Norwalk. You've got demons running around, and you don't want to get bit by them."

McMahon's three unearned runs in the second, the product of two infield errors, including a dropped pop fly in front of the pitcher's mound, ended up being the margin of victory for the Senators. An RBI double by McMahon catcher Ben

Jerrild in the first inning came on a fly ball to center that also could have been caught. Of the six McMahon runners to cross the plate, three reached on walks and another was safe on an error.

Throw in nine runners left on base, and it equaled a frustrating day for the Bears (5-5).

"If we take away the walks and the pop fly we dropped, this is a different ball game," said Bruno, whose team was designated as visitors after switching sites for next Friday night's FCIAC game at McMahon, which will be played under the lights at 7 p.m. "So we gave them some runs, and we had a number of opportunities we didn't cash in on. Coppola's a tough kid. Tip your cap to him. He got the outs when he had to."

Junior third baseman Taso Petridis went 2-for-3 with a triple, an RBI-single and one run scored to lead McMahon, which ended a four-game losing streak against the Bears.

"We knew we hadn't beaten them in a while," Coppola said. "But we were just coming out like it was

just another game."

McMahon was coming off a tough 5-1 loss against Darien on Wednesday, but if the Senators are showing one thing this season, it's resiliency. McMahon's only other loss was a 15-1 setback against Greenwich. The Senators responded with a 6-5 win over Westhill, another of the FCIAC's tougher teams.

"It speaks volumes about them to be able to separate games and play one game at a time," Cross said. "We're not dwelling on past performances. We're still learning how to play one pitch at a time, but we're moving in that direction. This is a very calm team. They're very even-keeled. They're not fazed by too much."

Savaides walked Coppola and second baseman Todd Lyons with one out in the bottom of the first and Jerrild lofted a fly ball to center that Brian Jacoby seemed to have a beat on. But the ball floated over his head and one-hopped the fence for a ground-rule double. Jack Culnane drove in Lyons with a sacrifice fly to put McMahon up 2-0.

Eric Stenger led off the



Hour photo/BEN GANCOS

Norwalk first baseman Corey Delbene stretches to snag the throw from shortstop Dom Franco as Brien McMahon's Tom Fullam arrives at first base a half-step late in the first inning of Thursday's game. The Senators took an early lead and held on for a 6-3 victory over their crosstown rivals.

bottom of the second with a nice opposite-field single to left and Petridis drove him in with a screaming triple that rolled to the fence in right-center. Savaides got leadoff batter Zach Ruther on a strikeout for the second out, and the Bears could have gotten out of the inning cheap after Coppola grounded a ball to third base. But the throw from Andrew Merritt went wide of the bag, allowing Petridis to score.

Lyons followed with a towering popup to the mound, but Savaides got his feet tangled beneath him and the ball dropped to his feet. Coppola, who stole third, walked home with McMahon's fifth run.

Norwalk pulled to within 5-1 in the top of the third as Iannazzo walked and scored on an RBI double by Savaides.

Savaides walked Culnane to lead off the third and Cohen walked Tom Fullam

after entering the game in relief. Cohen got the next two batters, but Culnane came around to score on a single up the middle by Petridis.

But that was all Cohen would surrender, pitching 1-2-3 innings in the fourth and fifth. Cohen gave up singles to Ruther and Coppola in the sixth and intentionally walked Jerrild, but struck out the side and got away

see McMAHON B4

Opening day will be special for Norwalk's youth leagues this season

From B1

The two new fields came at a price, however. The longtime International Little League field at Calf Pasture, the only Little League field in town with lights, was scrapped and replaced with a new softball field.

"It's a little disappointing to see that field go. That was like home," Halloran, who coached and umpired in the International LL, said. "But the two new fields at Vets are beautiful. The city did a really nice job."

"All the surrounding towns have built and kept up beautiful fields, and now Norwalk has finally stepped up and has some nice fields, too. Mayor Moccia, Mike Moccia (director of Recreation and Parks), Gerald and Fred Bondi (Common Council president and chairman of the R&P committee) were the backbone to get this done. They really put a lot of work in and our league owes them a lot of thanks."

Adding to the excitement is the fact both fields will be named after three individuals who dedicated countless hours to the growth of Little League baseball in Norwalk. The field formerly known as "Vets I" (closest to the docks) will be officially christened the Babe Spinola Field after the longtime American Little League coach and president.

Meanwhile, "Vets II" (the field closest to Overton's) will be named after Mario Salomone and Vinny Incantalupo, the longtime president and vice president of the International Little League.

"When I told Mario that we had decided to name the field after him, he said he won't accept it unless it's named after Vinny, too," Bondi pointed out. "He said 'We've always worked as a team,' and he's right. So we named it after both of them."

All three of them, along with Mayor Moccia, will throw out ceremonial first pitches. They will be joined by one other flamethrower, Ralph DiMeglio, a pitcher on the 1952 Norwalk Little League all-star team that won the World Series, who will be coming down from Watertown for the ceremonies.

Then it will be time to play ball.

"We have 14 games on Saturday and just about everyone is playing," Halloran said, noting they will also be using two fields in Broad River, one at Brookside School and one at the old Fitch School. "We have games at all the fields at 1, 3 and 5 p.m."

Mayor Moccia will no

sooner loosen his pitching arm up when he'll have to hop in his car and drive over to Tim Devine Field for the Cranbury League's opening ceremonies at noon.

That promises to be a very emotional event as the league is dedicating its 2008 season to Anthony Angione, a former player, coach and umpire in the league who was seriously injured in a motorcycle accident last summer and is going through a strenuous rehabilitation.

"Ironically, he's rehabbing at Honeyhill (Care Center), which is right behind the field," Cranbury president Bob Longmuir said. "Anthony has recovered a great deal, but he still has a lot of physical rehabilitation ahead of him."

"The reason we decided to dedicate the season to him was two fold," Longmuir added. "No. 1 is to say congratulations on your recovery and what you've done so far. And, second of all, to tell him to keep up the good work and just get better. That's why we're doing what we're doing. To support and encourage him."

It's a day the 26-year-old Angione has been looking forward to.

"He's so excited about this day," Longmuir said. "All the players in all our divisions will wear his initials on the sleeves of their uniforms."

It's a big enough day that

Abraham Key, the president and CEO of PONY Baseball in Washington, Pa., is making the trip to Norwalk. So is Terry Faust, the second vice president. In addition, a number of local political figures will join the Mayor on the field.

Sheila Devine, whose husband Tim Devine passed away in April 2000, and their daughters Shannon and Darcy, will take part in the first-pitch ceremonies.

The 2006 Cranbury season was dedicated to Angione's father, Anthony Jr., a former manager in several age groups and later commissioner of the 11-12 year-old division, who passed away in January 2006. One of the players he coached was his son.

"Anthony played all the way through our league, from the time he was seven all the way until he was 14," Longmuir said. "After that he umpired, he and his brother Billy, and three years ago he was named chief umpire."

"He was also a manager and two years ago his team won the season championship in our in-house tournament. Then last year he managed our 11-12 year-old tournament team that went 4-0 and then lost to Stratford in the finals two out of three games. Stratford went to the Bronco World Series and we actually beat them in one game."

Even while he rehabs, however, Angione will continue to be involved with

the league. He has been named a special advisor to the Board of Directors for this season.

But where he really wants to be is back in the dugout someday.

"That's his greatest wish and I'm optimistic he will," Longmuir said. "Every time I see him he improves. He's always in very good spirits and he gets lots of visitors. 'He's one of ours.'"

It will also be a big day for the Rowayton Little League, which will commemorate its 50th anniversary at this year's opening day ceremonies at Vin Vellotti Field, also set for high noon.

"We are the oldest Little League in Norwalk," President John Massey said.

He's right, too. Although three other leagues all began before Rowayton did in 1958, the Norwalk Little League's new charter is, after all, only a year old.

"This is the 50th anniversary of our charter as a Norwalk Little League, so it's very exciting," Massey said. "We got a golden certificate from National Little League in Williamsport for our golden anniversary."

"That will be the theme of our ceremony on Saturday. We'll have introductions and the parade of players and a nice cookout. We'll also salute our sponsors, who we love."

Can't forget the sponsors. And we haven't forgotten about the Cal Ripken League in West Norwalk,

which actually started before anyone. They've been playing since April 12 and held their opening ceremonies last Saturday.

"The Mayor threw out the first pitch and we had over 200 people there," league president Joe Parlanti said. "And we have 275 kids in the league this year, which is the most we've had in four or five years."

Next Saturday also promises to be a special day for youth baseball in Norwalk as the Cranbury League dedicates its field behind the old Roosevelt School in honor of Larry Anastasia, one of the founders of the league, and Tom Corbo,

who began his 43rd year of coaching in Cranbury baseball this week.

The Norwalk Junior Babe Ruth 13-year-old division has already begun play as well, and the 14-15 year-old division is right around the corner. Heck, before you know it, all the local youth baseball leagues will begin all-star play, and a few weeks later another Kinlock Tournament will be here.

But there's only one opening ceremonies, and it's on Saturday, shine or rain.

Norwalk is just lucky enough to have three of them.

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