(Photo by Darcy Wallace, *Illinois Valley News*)

Junior Andrew McLaughlin #13, warms up between innings against Grants Pass High School March 19, 2011 in Grants Pass.

IVHS baseball season begins at Grants Pass

By Darcy Wallace
IVN Staff Writer

Illinois Valley High School's baseball season officially began Saturday, March 19, in a doubleheader at Grants Pass High School.

The Cougars did many things well in both games; they showed several moments of strong pitching, field defense and got plenty of hits. But they ultimately lost the first game 5-9, then the second 7-17.

But Illinois Valley coach Bob Johnson isn't too concerned.

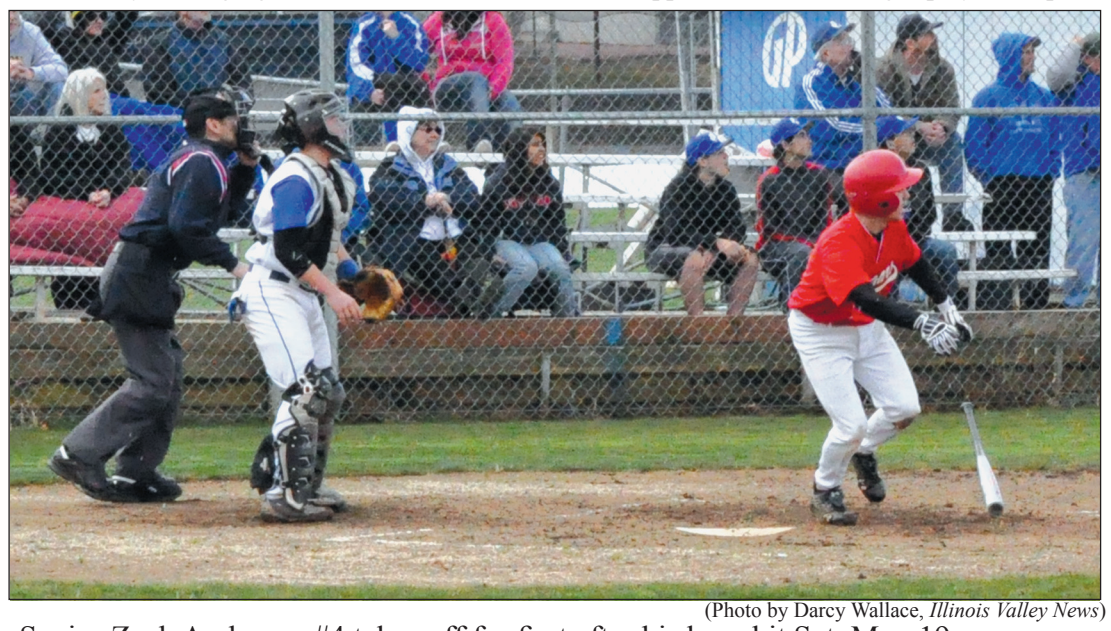
"We had a bunch of young pitchers come in who last pitched in Little League," Johnson said. "I was pleasantly surprised. They weren't overwhelmed; they went out and did well. So, I'm anticipating as a team we're going to improve really quickly."

In the first game, the Cougars went up 4-2 early off a home run by Zach Anderson and strong pitching by Bryan Biggs. Later on, Johnson switched out several pitchers to give them much-needed experience against an opponent.

"I thought we played really good defense the first game," Johnson said. "We had a pretty good chance to win, and [Grants Pass] is a good JV team. All in all, I was pleased."

Illinois Valley has put in plenty of practice already, managing about two weeks worth of training before Saturday's games. Heavy rain has made it difficult, however, for players to actually get on the field; Johnson said the team has often had to work in the gym.

According to Johnson, Saturday's games were opportunities for Cougar players to put it all together.



(Photo by Darcy Wallace, *Illinois Valley News*)

Senior Zach Anderson #4 takes off for first after his base hit Sat. Mar. 19.

"I was just happy to get a couple games and let the kids play," Johnson said. "They're not so antsy now."

In the second game, Cougar players still scored runs but lacked the consistent pitching of the first game. But freshman Tally Baker came out of the gate with a base hit in the first game for IVHS.

"[Baker] was 1-1 in his first high-school at-bat," Johnson said. "He was pretty happy about that."

Johnson said older players on the team might not have had their best games Saturday, but was pleased with how they encouraged younger teammates during the games.

"One of my rules is I want these older guys to help the younger guys," Johnson said. "We're all in this baseball thing together…we're going to be a fun team to watch."

The Cougars were scheduled to play Crater's junior varsity team on Tuesday, March 22, and are set to face Prospect Carter on Saturday, March 26.

IVHS girls' JV takes first in track meet

By Darcy Wallace
IVN Staff Writer

Illinois Valley High School's track and fielders may have struggled at the varsity level, but junior varsity students shined in the season's first meet Tuesday, March 15, at St. Mary's.

Overall, the Cougar men's team took tenth and the women's team took ninth in varsity, going up against tough competition from Cascade Christian, St. Mary's, North Valley and Oakland.

A highlight for Lady Cougar track Tuesday was in the throwing events, where senior Kayla Johnson took first in discus and javelin.

In women's junior varsity, Samantha Milner took first in the mile run with a time of 7:08, ahead of the second-place runner by almost five seconds. Lady Cougars JV took first overall with a decisive 80-point win.

At the varsity level, freshman Jordan Rich ran a 6:06 mile; freshman Vince Nguyen ran the two-mile race in 11:51, good for an 11th-place finish. Celilo Nordal wasn't far behind at 12:13.

IV junior varsity students Amanda Brooks and Theresa Frederick took first and second, respectively, in the 100-meter hurdles. Both were part of the 4x100 meter relay with Samantha Milner and Taysha Hodge, taking first.

Next up, the Cougars are scheduled to compete against North Valley, Mazama and Hidden Valley on Tuesday, March 29.

(Photo by Darcy Wallace, *Illinois Valley News*)

The Illinois Valley High School Softball team also played its first games of the Spring 2011 season at Grants Pass High School against Hidden Valley on March 19. This year's team is headed by Cathy Pope. Weather permitting, the Lady Cougars are set to play Prospect Charter March 26.