

Elks baseball racks up win in 'Dawg house

BY JON STINNETT
FOR THE SENTINEL

An all-too-brief transition between sports and two tough early losses spelled a tough start to the 2021 season for Elkton baseball.

And yet, a convincing win against a non-league opponent last week may have the Elks finding their

footing.

Many of Elkton's players found themselves competing on the diamond just days after a playoff football game to begin this crazy six-week, Covid-shortened season. Tough losses at Glendale and Umpqua Valley Christian showcased the lack of preparation time.

On Thursday, April 22,

however, the Elks traveled north for a non-league contest against the Creswell Bulldogs. Senior Jayce Clevenger led his team through 4 1/3 innings, striking out seven. Conner Anderson came in for relief, then Alex Allen.

At the plate, Clevenger joined a group of Elkton batters including Cooper Peters, Trevyn Luzier,

Cash Boe and Allen with two hits apiece on the afternoon, powering the Elks to an 18-10 victory.

After the game, Elkton Manager Devin Luzier said that despite a satisfying win, his team has more work to do.

"It was great to get the win, but we have a lot of areas that need improvement," he said.

Luzier lauded Clevenger's ability as a team leader to pitch through tight situations, in addition to his team's production up and down the lineup.

"I think some of the younger guys are getting more comfortable at the plate, and it shows," he said. "If we can tighten up our defense and keep improving our pitching, we

should be a tough team to beat."

The Elks looked to build on their momentum on Tuesday when they traveled to Glide to take on the Wildcats (after press deadlines) and will look ahead to a Friday twin-billing at home against Oakland.

First pitch goes out at 2 p.m., followed by the nightcap at 4:30 p.m.

Lady Eagles young, learning — and eager to earn wings

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With a fledgling team and little time to prepare, it's perhaps understandably been an up-and-down start to this year's Yoncalla softball season.

A team that manager Chad Ashbaugh describes as "young and learning" has thus far ridden a seesaw of wins and losses. The Eagles eked out a wild 24-23 win against Glendale to start the season, then dropped both ends of a doubleheader against Oakridge.

Yoncalla won 22-10 on the road at Riddle before hosting the dangerous North Douglas Warriors in another Friday doubleheader April 23.

For many Eagles players, it's the most softball action they've seen in a while — heck, maybe ever.

"We had two weeks of pitchers and catchers, then six days (of practice) with the full team," Ash-

baugh said. "Before that, a lot of these girls had never even touched a softball."

Yoncalla is trying to restart its youth softball program, he explained, to give its young people the foundational skills in the sport that will spell success later on. Many current players lack that foundation.

Still, Ashbaugh says he's encouraged that the high school has had enough players to fill its own softball team, following a long stint in which Yoncalla and Elkton played together.

On Friday, the Eagles saw what years of playing ball together can accomplish at North Douglas, where the Warriors came out firing to win 18-0, then 11-0.

"Friday was rough," Ashbaugh said. "Drain is a very well-oiled machine. They've got a great youth program. Their girls have played together for a lot of years, and it definitely

shows on the field. And their coach does a really good job."

The Eagles showcased solid defense and had a few nice hits, but lopsided innings proved their downfall. Despite the loss, though, Ashbaugh cited strong performances from senior third-baseman and pitcher Ceci Potter, and junior utility player and pitcher Alison Vanloon.

"For what we've got, the girls are absolutely doing amazing," he said. "I expect much bigger things by the end of the year."

The Eagles will have to wait awhile for those "bigger things," as eligibility issues forced the cancellation of games against Oakland and Monroe this week.

They'll work to reschedule those games toward the end of the season, and they'll host Days Creek for a doubleheader next Tuesday, May 4, with games at noon and 2 p.m.

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