

Sportsmanship team puts class in session



MARK HUTCHINSON

Program builds legacy in district

From this vantage point, one of the best and most important events of the 2022-23 Oconomowoc Area School District sports season was among the last.

Under the direction of Oconomowoc High School girls basketball coach Kim Mueske, a team of 16 OHS student-athletes visited the district's two middle schools.

They addressed the students about the importance of good sportsmanship and representing their school and community in a positive manner.

The initiative's roots date back to last fall.

"Back in October, 12 of us represented Oconomowoc at the Classic 8 sportsmanship summit, where all nine schools in the conference brought a group of student-ath-



Submitted photo

Members of the Oconomowoc High School sportsmanship team gather outside of Nature Hill Intermediate School following their May visit there. The season-long initiative promoted good sportsmanship across the Oconomowoc Area School District.

"When you wear 'Oconomowoc' on the front of your jersey, you not only represent this community, but your family, coaches and even friends."

Logan Arndt
Oconomowoc sportsmanship team member

important? What actions/steps can we take to have better sportsmanship?"

The program ventured beyond what takes place within the sports arena.

"We had a presentation that highlighted the importance of sportsmanship not only on the field playing sports, but also as it applies to life skills in general," class of 2024 member Nickel Kratzer said.

Several of the team members outlined what the middle school visits entailed.

"We created an interactive presentation about sportsmanship for the eighth-graders," 2023 graduate Kaiden Bavuso said. "We taught them proper etiquette at games at home and away. We taught them how to respect the officials, opponents, spectators and coaches."

"We incorporated games into the presentation to keep them engaged at all times. At the end, we let them create skits to demonstrate the

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LAND O' LAKES BASEBALL

Oconomowoc takes two

Pitching depth comes through

By Mark Hutchinson
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OCONOMOWOC — Pitching depth and a next-man-up mentality have already paid huge dividends for the Oconomowoc Five O's baseball team in 2023.

The Five O's pitching staff was spread a bit thin for Saturday's Land O' Lakes Baseball League doubleheader at Roosevelt Field.

But Mau Villegas and Alec Esenther took the hill and took care of business to lead Oconomowoc to a 5-3, 12-0 sweep of the Merton Amvets, who bounced the Five O's from the LOL playoffs last season.

Oconomowoc, 2-0 in the LOL Kettle Moraine Division, hiked its overall record to 5-1, while Merton sank to 2-4.



Submitted photo by Suzie Meyer

Karsen Rupnow slides safely home with an Oconomowoc run during the Five O's Land O Lakes Baseball League doubleheader sweep of the Merton Amvets on Saturday at Roosevelt Field.

"I have to give the guys a lot of credit for stepping up."

Bob Anderson
Oconomowoc Five O's manager

shortened up innings. When we do that, we control our pitch counts and get our pitchers deep into games.

"We got two complete games today. I couldn't ask any more than that because we're short of pitching right now. We're scraping a little bit, but this is a non-divisional weekend and we're getting guys work. It's exciting to see what we're doing."

Merton manufactured two runs on three walks and a hit in the top of the second inning of the opening game before Villegas found his groove and allowed only one run the rest of the way.

"The big thing that helped was Coach coming out for a mound meeting to give me

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Submitted photo by Suzie Meyer

Oconomowoc Five O's pitcher Alec Esenther strides toward the plate and gets ready to deliver a pitch Saturday.



LAND O' LAKES FASTPITCH

O's sweep first home twin bill

Carlee Balk belts three home runs

By Mark Hutchinson
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SUMMIT — A chilly drizzle and wet grounds put Land O' Lakes Baseball League fastpitch doubleheaders to the test Sunday.

The show went on, though, at Genesee Lake Road Park.

The Oconomowoc Five O's hiked their record to 4-0 in the league's inaugural season with a 9-2, 12-0 sweep of the Sussex Cardinals.

"It was a tough day with the rain and wind," Oconomowoc manager Paul Clark said. "This is a fun bunch of ladies to manage."

Oconomowoc didn't score through the first three innings of the opener and faced a 2-0 deficit entering the bottom of the fourth inning before rallying for seven runs.

The Five O's tallied a pair of insurance runs in the sixth while holding the Cardinals scoreless.

Savannah Serdynski, Carlee Balk and Tori Braman — the top three batters in Oconomowoc's order — collected two hits apiece and

Land O' Lakes Fastpitch Softball League		
	W	L
Oconomowoc Five O's	4	0
Milton Hawks	2	0
Lake Mills Outlawz	1	1
Monches Irish	1	1
Merton Amvets	0	2
Sussex Cardinals	0	4

Sunday Results: Oconomowoc 9, Sussex 2; Oconomowoc 12, Sussex 0

scored one run each, as did Andrea Kuhne.

Ella Wolda launched a grand slam, and Carlee Balk also homered for the Five O's.

Lori Lawton scored a pair of runs, while seven different players contributed to the team's 11-hit total.

Kayla Preisler earned the pitching victory after throwing 6 2/3 innings and allowing only two runs (one earned) on eight hits and two walks while striking out eight.

Kuhne, Taylor Emrath and Serdynski pitched a combined shutout in the second game, yielding only three hits and three walks while striking out five.

The Five O's took command quickly, plating 10 runs in the bottom of the first inning.

Braman hammered out

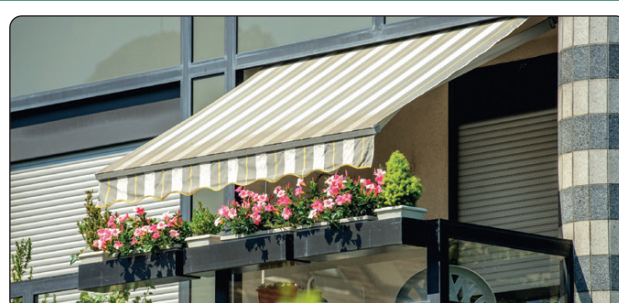
SOFTBALL, PAGE 2B

Birds ON DECK

Recycled Plastic Patio And Deck Furniture
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Windows, Doors and Gutter Covers



Thru July 15th



Home Improvements
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PREP BOYS GOLF REVIEW

Tourney titles highlight 2023 campaign

Dahl likes young team's potential

By Mark Hutchinson
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OCONOMOWOC — Oconomowoc High School has not reached the WIAA State Boys Golf Tournament since 2006.

The 2023 squad missed qualifying for the elite event by the narrowest of margins, falling one stroke shy of Waukesha North in the Germantown Sectional at Blackstone Creek Golf Course.

Putting the big picture into perspective, though, the recently completed season was a banner one for the Raccoons.

“As I reflect back on the season, I am so proud of these guys for their dedication and hard work they put in,” Ocon coach Jason Dahl said. “It definitely showed as we took a significant leap in contending for conference and almost knocking on the door of a team state berth.”

“There is some much to be proud of for this past season of boys golf.”

Among the highlights of the season were two Classic 8 Conference mini-meet victories, championship con-



The Oconomowoc boys golf team assembles following the Classic 8 Conference Tournament. The Raccoons finished fourth in the tournament and third overall in the conference.

quests in the Brookfield Central Invite and Waukesha West Invite, a tie for third place in the Kohler Invite, a third-place performance in the Waukesha

County Championship and a fourth-place effort in the Classic 8 Conference Tournament.

The Raccoons finished third overall in the confer-

ence, third in their regional and third in their sectional, where they shot a school-record 299.

Logan Suter, JP Flannery and Drew Maglio earned

second-team All-Classic 8 status.

Suter was selected Oconomowoc's Most Valuable Player, and he shared captain's duties with Bren-

“As I reflect back on the season, I am so proud of these guys for their dedication and hard work they put in. It definitely showed as we took a significant leap in contending for conference and almost knocking on the door of a team state berth.”

dan Koenig.

Dahl will miss his graduating seniors — Suter and Quentin Duero — who made an impact on the program.

“While we only had three years with these guys, they really made the most of their three years with us at OHS,” Dahl said. “They helped raise the bar for our team.”

Dahl is extremely optimistic about the program's immediate future and right-fully so.

“The future is bright, with lots of returners next year — Drew Maglio, JP Flannery, Jack Pilachowski, Aiden Parent, Paxton Denton, Brendan Koenig, Henry Greves, Aidan Truchan and Cadyn Palmer,” Dahl said. “This group has the ability to do something really special the next two seasons for OHS golf.”



Ocon wrestling sets sporting clays shoot

OCONOMOWOC — The third annual Oconomowoc Wrestling Club Sporting Clay Fundraiser Shoot will be held July 22 at Milford Hills in Johnson Creek.

Registration will run from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m., lunch is set for 10 a.m., a safety speech will follow at 10:45 a.m., and the sporting clays shotgun

start is slated for 11 a.m. A dinner, auction and door prize drawings will begin at 4 p.m.

The costs are \$160 per shooter and \$75 per non-shooter. Preregistrations are due by July 8.

To register, visit the Oconomowoc Wrestling Club Facebook page.

Basketball shooting program offered to girls in community

OCONOMOWOC — Oconomowoc Area School District girls in grades three through 12 are invited to register for the Raccoon Summer Shooting Challenge.

The purpose of the program is to give girls a goal to shoot baskets during the summer and become more proficient overall shooters.

Participants are encouraged to shoot at least 100 shots per day, record the number they make and submit a paper or online copy by Aug. 31 to become eligible for prizes.

Charts should include the student's name and grade, the dates, the number of shots made and the rebounder's name.

For details, visit the Oconomowoc Girls Basketball Facebook page or the OASD website.

Softball

From Page 1B

four hits in four at-bats, scored one run and knocked in a pair, and Chloe Auxier also went 4-for-4 and scored a run.

Carlee Balk continued to provide power with three hits — including a pair of homers — in four trips, scored three runs and drove in five.

Chmrrath and Kuhnerhipped in with a pair of hits apiece, while Melissa Schultz collected three runs batted in.

Oconomowoc player/coach Brooke Balk, who was coach-

ing her travel team out of state, was thrilled at the news of the Five O's second consecutive doubleheader sweep.

“People were blowing up my phone during the games because one of my former high school players, Ella Woida, hit her first-ever grand slam Sunday and my younger sister, Carlee Balk, had an absolute day at the plate, hitting three home runs,” Balk said. “It was a big day at the plate for a few Five O's players. ... so sad I missed it!”

The Five O's will return to action by taking on the Monches Irish in a doubleheader at 11 a.m. June 25 at Monches Recreation Park.

Sportsmanship

From Page 1B

proper way to use sportsmanship.”

The presentation spanned a wide spectrum.

“We shared with them what sportsmanship really means — not just as a player, but as a student or friend,” 2023 grad Logan Arndt said. “We emphasized the value of being able to play the game you love with your friends — therefore no game should be taken advantage of by bad sportsmanship.”

“When you wear ‘Oconomowoc’ on the front of your jersey, you not only represent this community, but your family, coaches and even friends.”

The presenters also detailed the repercussions of poor sportsmanship or inappropriate conduct.

“We shared with them how with every action comes a consequence and actions can be made within a split second,” Arndt said. “That is why practicing good sportsmanship will benefit you on the court/field when you are in the heat of the moment.”

“We covered many aspects such as respecting officials, coaches, parents and teammates.”

The sportsmanship team covered a broad range of ways in which good sportsmanship and classy conduct can be demonstrated.

“We shared how sportsmanship is not only displayed on the court/field,” Arndt said. “Student-athletes are held to a standard that portrays respect, ambition and most importantly accountability.”

“Because our audience was eighth-grade, we made sure to remind them that they are growing up to be young adults. With this comes a level of responsibility. Coaches at the high school level will not tolerate actions that will have a negative impact on the team.”

“Sports are meant to be fun and enjoyable. With that being said, most importantly, we made sure to tell all of the students to have fun with their high school sports: ‘The memories you make will forever be cherished. Take advantage of the moments you get to laugh with your teammates, play against your friends and kindle new relationships.’”

Several of Arndt's teammates also shared what they learned during their years at OHS about sportsmanship.

“Displaying good sportsmanship in my eyes is showing good gestures to the officials like shaking their hands after the game and not talking back to them after a call you don't agree with,” Bavuso said. “Sportsmanship can also be shown to the other team by not trash-talking them and screaming at them — just prove to them who is better by the way you play and do so respectfully.”

Proper sportsmanship isn't strictly demonstrated when large audiences are watching.

“Good sportsmanship is founded on doing it everywhere,” Kratzer said. “Good sportsmanship includes looking out for others' needs, being respectful, and winning/losing with dignity and respect.”

The presenters, who also included Phillip Borgman, Eva Halaska, Lia Nicholson, Maria Jorgensen, Sofia Kollath, Megan Tesmer, Tatium Blaine, Zoe Morgan, Lawrence Gunja, Andrew Mirek, Bryn Mihelich and Zach Lord, enjoyed the interaction they had with the eighth-graders.

Some of the questions that were asked and comments made indicated that the audiences were captivated engaged and inquisitive.

“The comments that stood out were that the students asked why we should have good sportsmanship to the oppos-



Oconomowoc High School students share the importance of exemplary sportsmanship during one of their middle school visits.

ing team when we want to beat them and are really competitive,” Bavuso said. “Another kid mentioned, ‘If we want to win, we need to beat the other team no matter what.’”

Ninmann shared some of her experiences.

“I had excellent conversations at both schools,” she said. “Students from both schools shared stories from their own sports teams where poor sportsmanship was seen.”

“Then as a group, we brainstormed ideas of how the situation could've been prevented or how we could have flipped the situation to be a positive outcome.”

Arndt stressed the importance of the exchanges.

“As a freshman in high school, your mind begins to wander,” he said. “The environment in front of you is completely different. Because of this, we made sure to take the time for any questions from the eighth-graders.”

“One student asked me if it was tough to be a multisport athlete in high school. To him, I answered that I regret not being a multiple-sport athlete in high school because it can open new doors and relationships that you never expected.”

The conversation branched out.

“I emphasized that the coaches will always make sure you stay on pace with your grades,” Arndt said. “And for some reason, if you don't, you will be given many opportunities to jump back into the right path. Playing multiple sports will not only improve your health and skillset, but it will hold you accountable that much more.”

“Another student asked me how I displayed sportsmanship outside of basketball. Luckily I was the leader of our student section for football, so I explained how having sportsmanship as a fan is just as important as a player. This is because you still represent your community.”

Ninmann and Arndt shared why it is important to them to display good sportsmanship as representatives of their school and community.

“I believe that as a student-athlete, whether you have your uniform on or not, you are always being watched and representing Oconomowoc,” Ninmann said. “It's up to the individual to be grounded, committed and accountable and make the right choices.”

“Especially once you're in high school, the little kids are watching you as you play dreaming of their day to come. Holding yourself in a positive manner on and off the court/field/mat/etc. is a representation to the whole community because you chose to wear ‘Oconomowoc’ across your chest.”

Arndt has vivid memories of his elementary and middle school years, and he remembers the impact the role models who came before him had.



An attentive audience gathers around a member of the OHS sportsmanship team.

“Representing this community and school means a lot to me,” he said. “I say this because I can remember the days when I would attend high school games as a little kid and how much I looked up to those players.”

“With that being said, I've done as much as I could to interact with the youth whether it be coaching camps, helping out with practices or interning for a teacher. Doing that puts a smile on my face because I want to leave a footprint for the youth to follow not only on sportsmanship, but leadership as well.”

The members of the sportsmanship team obviously recognize the importance and influence that come with legacy.

“My time as an Oconomowoc student is officially coming to an end,” Arndt said. “That is why I'm beyond grateful to have been a part of this sportsmanship program to make an impact on our community and Raccoons.”

“Playing a sport is a blessing. Not many people have the ability to put a jersey on with their friends. I'm glad my jersey was purple and gold and I'll never forget my roots.”

Back at this vintage point, that is what high school sports ought to be all about.

I consider myself blessed and privileged to live and work in Oconomowoc.

(Enterprise sports editor Mark Hutchinson may be reached at mhutchinson@conley.net.com.)

God bless my new hero

Childlike faith keeps 11-year-old Evan Rennieke going strong

When I was 11 years old, my heroes included Bart Starr and Jon McGlocklin.

Their accomplishments as world-champion professional athletes spoke volumes, but my admiration for them went beyond those to the Christian testimony they shared on a consistent basis and their exemplary community leadership.

Now that I'm 64 — and almost grown up — I have a new hero.

And guess what?

He's 11 years old!

One Sunday morning, the Lord's guiding hand led a family to sit adjacent to me at St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Oconomowoc, where I was baptized in 1959.

The family was that of Evan Rennieke, an Ixonia boy who had been recently diagnosed with a rare form of childhood brain cancer called Medulloblastoma.

He was undergoing treatment at Northwestern Medicine Cancer Center in Warrenville, Ill.

Shortly after the article appeared, I reached out to another one of my heroes — former basketball coach and current ESPN commentator Dick Vitale — who has dedicated the recent years of his life raising money for the V Foundation, which he formed in memory of the late Jim Valvano.

I shared Evan's story with "Dickie V," who immediately took interest and reached out to Evan and his family with words of encouragement and a very special delivery.

I met my fellow cancer battler for the first time a week later at church, exchanged fist bumps and offered a few spiritual well wishes of my own.

Since that time, I have become Facebook friends with Evan's parents and have been amazed at their reports reflecting their son's faith, resilience and strength in the face of his extreme adversity.

My prayers on his behalf have been continuous as he continues his brave battle.

I would venture a guess that many of those with afflictions like Evan's spend much of their time down and out, unable to go on with their life or unwilling to try.

Evan has been a remarkable exception to such rules.

He not only completed his fifth-grade year at St. Matthew's Lutheran School, but has continued to pursue his passions, which include hunting, fishing and baseball.

"Evan has handled the pain, fear and toll of battling cancer overall very well," said Andrew Rennieke, Evan's father. "Evan has fought valiantly against some strong side effects, the biggest being prevailing fatigue - causing him to opt to go to bed earlier in the evening. He is enjoying sleeping late now that school is out for the summer months."

"He has been very brave dealing with the pain, mostly experienced from the two- to three-day inpatient treatments that he endures every three weeks."

"The other two weeks, he receives outpatient treatments and he has been brave enduring the large needle that accesses and de-accesses his internal 'port' that he has had placed in him since October of 2022."

Evan's faith and bravery have been downright remarkable.

"He grits his teeth and squeezes Mom and Dad's hands and then lets the nurse know confidently,



MARK HUTCHINSON

"I'm ready!" Andrew Rennieke said. "Evan wears a protective plate under his jersey to protect from being hit at the site of his port."

"There is a cumulative toll to this cancer battle. Evan has had five emotionally 'bad days' with questions like, 'Why is this happening to me,' and 'What did I do to deserve this?' They are difficult to grapple with."

Even more remarkable than Evan's courage has been his childlike faith — the strongest there is, the Bible tells us.

"Evan considers Jesus to be his hero because he knows that Jesus endured pain far worse than what Evan has dealt with and has conquered sin, death and hell, so Evan knows that Jesus can help him defeat cancer, too," Andrew Rennieke said. "Some emotions that Evan has experienced since being diagnosed with cancer are fear, worry, anxiety, nervousness, but he has also learned to cope with those emotions by realizing this race is a marathon and not a sprint."

"He has countered the bad emotions with encouragement to wait, trust and pray. The good Lord is in control, and Evan firmly believes this!"

"Evan knows that through his baptism, he is a child of God. He prays to Jesus often, before meals and before bed. Evan knows that Jesus is his Savior from sin, and faith in Him is his key to life everlasting!"

Evan's parents Andrew and Chelsie have been steadfast rocks during their son's ordeal. They have endured with him from the beginning. They have taken time away from work and are thankful for both Family Medical Leave Act and accommodating employers.

Almost always, both parents are with him, supporting him at every treatment he undergoes.

Evan recently said, "I only have 15 more treatments! That's not that many!"

"Thinking of the entirety of our cancer journey can get overwhelming, but if we break it down, it is manageable," Andrew Rennieke said. "Evan has adopted this thinking, taking it one day at a time."

"That is his advice to others dealing with adversity whether cancer or otherwise — take the battles one day at a time, and if you do that, then you can think optimistically to yourself, 'I got this!'"

Evan has not only continued to play baseball for his Oconomowoc Area Baseball Club Five O's team, but has not backed down playing two of the most pressure-packed positions on the field — catcher and pitcher.

"Evan loves baseball, excelling most behind the plate or in the outfield," Andrew Rennieke said.

"His coach, Andrew Anderson, has always been encouraging and pushing Evan to strive for success while out of his comfort zone while on the mound once this



Evan Rennieke wears his catcher gear during a baseball game.

year. Evan pitched all right and got out of the inning allowing only one run.

"But if Evan had his choice, he would don the catching equipment and get dirty behind the dish."

"I love catching because you are in every single play," Evan said.

A highlight of Evan's season came after he missed two games because of inpatient treatments. He rejoined the team by getting two hits that drove in three crucial runs, and he was awarded the game ball by the team.

"Such inspirational encouragement from coaches and teammates has been invaluable to draw strength from on days where he is down or receiving treatment," Andrew Rennieke said. "Times when he would rather be on the ballfield are too many this year, but thank God for baseball to help him get through a year full of cancer treatments."

"Evan is lifted up every time he takes the field for a game or practice. He loves being a part of the Five O's baseball family, and we are grateful to them for waiving his playing fees for this year — such a generous and kind gesture from the organization."

The Renniekes will be eternally grateful for the many individuals who have helped Evan fight his battle.

"So many have helped to keep him strong along the way — immediate family, both sets of grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins have taken off of work and traveled to help the family with Evan's two siblings while he receives treatment."

"Classmates and a few close, neighborhood friends have been invaluable allies in this journey. Evan's baseball teammates and coaches are like extended family, providing him both with a super outlet for getting away from thinking about cancer while on the field, but also have provided him with emotional encouragement through the bond of friendship."

Others have lent assistance as well.

"Evan has endured and has found it helpful to meet with a counselor through Wisconsin



Evan Rennieke holds up a fish that he caught.

Lutheran Child and Family Services," Andrew Rennieke said.

"The meetings were arranged by Pastor Philip Bigelow through St. Matthew's church."

"The church has been so supportive to us. Financially, the church fund-raised and the school waived tuition and hot lunch fees. The church body provided us with weekly meals for months and has been emotionally supporting us with cards of encouragement and uplifting scripture passages."

"Spiritually, all three pastors (Bigelow, Steven Hillmer and Daniel Schmidt) have visited our home multiple times, making sure we are OK. In addition to the church, the school has been invaluable. Mrs. (Amy) Werner Vannieuwenhoven as well as Mrs. (Amy) Mamerow in addition to Principal (Tom) Plitzuweit as well as others were so instrumental in helping Evan still maintain his educational goals making fifth

grade a valuable year for him academically.

"Evan missed 60+ days of school from sick days before he was diagnosed to missing days for surgery, recovery and subsequent treatments. The school adopted a slogan, 'Brave like Evan,' citing Joshua 1:9 as a motto of support for Evan as he was supported by the entire school throughout his trials this year."

The importance of their Rennieke children's Christian education has become more obvious than ever during the family's trials.

"Evan's Christian education has given him a solid foundation on which to stay firmly footed on the truth that this is all happening for his good and that it is all happening for a reason," Andrew Rennieke said. "Evan has said, 'Maybe I am going through this so that someday I can help others who are fighting cancer, too.'"

Around the world of sports with Delsman

Columnist gives his takes on Brewers, Bucks and more

Here's everything I know about the world of sports. I thought you should know it too.

■ I told all of you three weeks ago that despite all the negative talk by the local talking heads in sports, I still believe the Milwaukee Brewers are going to win the National League Central Division championship. The Brewers still rank in the bottom in all of baseball in many offensive categories. But they just came off a sharp 7-3 road trip after defeating Pittsburgh on Sunday, 6-3. The pitching has been good and all this team needs now is a healthy Brandon Woodruff to return to the starting rotation.

■ Brewers left fielder Christian Yelich has turned things around in June after getting off to a terrible start early in the season. As of Monday morning, he was hitting .273 and I see him fin-

ishing the season at .285 with 25 home runs. Plus, newcomer Andrew Monasterio only has 43 plate appearances but is hitting .255. I see Willy Adames and Joey Wiemer improving offensively in the second half of the season. Don't give up on the Brewers!

■ The Milwaukee Bucks' front office took care of business last week by resigning Khris Middleton and Brook Lopez. This team is ready to challenge once again for the NBA championship next season. Lopez is one of the most underrated players in the league and Middleton is rock-solid but he has to stay healthy. Denver is the best team in the league but the Bucks are the second-best team.

■ If Los Angeles Angels standout pitcher and hitter Shohei Ohtani continues to play at his present pace in the future, there's not a



CHUCK DELSMAN

doubt in my mind that he'll finish his career as the best baseball player of all time. Ohtani hit his 31st home run Sunday night. Babe Ruth put up some impressive numbers both hitting and pitching in his day, but he didn't face the quality of competition that Ohtani does both on the mound and at the plate. This guy is special and a lot of fun to watch. He's great for baseball.

■ Speaking of great baseball players from the past, being an old man and a huge fan of the Milwaukee Braves, I think Eddie Mathews is the second best player ever to play in Milwaukee, behind only Henry Aaron. Robin Yount is third. Mathews hit 512 home runs and is generally considered to be the second-best third baseman of all-time, behind only

Mike Schmidt. He put together three of the best seasons in history when he hit 47 home runs in 1953, 40 homers in 1954 and 41 homers in 1955. He hit 40 or more home runs four times and hit 30 or more home runs 10 times. Plus, the one-two punch of Mathews batting third and Aaron batting fourth has to be one of the best back-to-back hitting combinations in baseball history.

■ Wimbledon started Monday morning in England and the grass courts looked great. They won't look that good when the finals are played on July 15 and 16. I see Novak Djokovic winning the men's title and Carlos Alcaraz getting upset before the semifinals. In the women's division I'm going with Elena Rybakina successfully defending her title as she stops Iga Swiatek in the finals.

■ Once again Wisconsin golf came out the winner at the national level as Bernhard Langer won the 2023 U.S. Senior Open at SentryWorld in Stevens Point on

Sunday. The course was spectacular and proved to be a serious challenge to the best senior golfers in the world. SentryWorld is now on the map along with Erin Hills and Whistling Straits as hosting some of the biggest golf tournaments in the world. Wisconsin now ranks as one of the top two states in the country for high-quality and outstanding golf venues.

■ And how good of a showing did Wisconsin's own Steve Stricker and Jerry Kelly put on at the tournament? Especially that finish on the 18th hole on Saturday.

■ The NFL season is still more than two months away and after looking over the 2023 schedule, I have no idea how many games the Green Bay Packers are going to win. But I do know this: The first two games of the season, at Chicago and at Atlanta, will tell us a lot about how the Packers will fare this season. They should win both of those games, right?

■ Will somebody please tell ESPN that the annual

Nathan's Hot Dog Eating Contest is not sports. It's time to stop the nonsense. And please tell me you didn't watch.

■ Will Miami Marlins second baseman Luis Arraez hit .400 this year? Nobody has accomplished that feat since Ted Williams, arguably the greatest hitter ever, hit .406 in 1941. Arraez went into Sunday batting .388 through 300 plate appearances. He's been above .400 a couple of times. I wish the 26-year-old well. But I don't see anybody batting .400 for a long, long time. The pitching is just too good.

■ The Major League Baseball season is just over one-half over. And I'm here to tell you that the Atlanta Braves are the best team in the game. The Braves can do it all. They're loaded from top to bottom. After the Braves, the rest of the top five are Tampa Bay second, Baltimore third, Arizona fourth and Texas fifth. Who had Baltimore, Arizona and Texas in their preseason top five. I'll tell you who. Nobody!

O's resurgence merits more witnesses



MARK HUTCHINSON

Team has come long way in short time

Once upon a time, Oconomowoc was considered a passionate baseball community.

The Oconomowoc Five O's have begun a quest for a renaissance.

How cool it would be if a large throng of community members turned out to watch them continue that quest this weekend.

The Five O's, who claimed their first Land O' Lakes Baseball League division title since 2009 by downing Genesee 11-1 on July 30, completed their 2023 regular season with another 11-1 triumph over West Bend on Friday.

They wound up 6-2 in the Kettle Moraine Division and 13-4 overall. They earned the second seed in the LOL playoffs and a bye through last weekend's opening round.

They will make their playoff debut at 2 p.m. Saturday when they take on the 18th-seeded Milwaukee Beavers at Rome Park, and the winner will advance to play at 11 a.m. Sunday at Roosevelt Field against either the seventh-seeded West Bend Spirits or the 10th-seed-



Submitted photo by Suzie Meyer

Alec Esenther of the Oconomowoc Five O's connects with the baseball during a 2023 game. The O's recently clinched their first Land O' Lakes Baseball League division title since 2009, and are hoping their success attracts larger crowds for the playoffs, which will begin for them Saturday.

ed Milwaukee Heavy Hitters.

Sunday's survivor will move on to play with the 11th-seeded Dousman Frogs, the sixth-seeded Monches Irish, the 18th-seeded Brookfield Blue Sox or the third-seeded Kenosha Kings in an Aug. 19 semifinal at Monches, and the championship game will follow there at 3 p.m. that day.

Oconomowoc's 12 wins in 2022 eclipsed the team's totals from the previous four seasons combined, and the Five O's 13 victories thus far in 2023 are their most since 2010.

Four individuals who have been instrumental in the beginning of the renaissance were asked what it means to them to be part of

Oconomowoc's return to Land O' Lakes prominence and what they remember about the franchise's previous glory years.

"I was still learning how to walk," said catcher Sean Meyer, who ranks fourth in the LOL in hitting at .540. "We definitely went to games when I was a kid, and I was bat boy for a few teams.

"That would give me flashbacks to the high school playoffs and seeing all the kids come down for our playoff games. I'm ready to see that again. I love that energy."

Jack Anderson
Oconomowoc Five O's team member, on the prospect of competing before large Land O' Lakes playoff crowds

"It means more that we played with 'Dusty' (Steve Rhoads) and Derek (Nelson) and Ronnie (Meunier) and them because they always told us how good the old teams were. Now we can fire back at them.

"It means a lot for the city. Maybe we'll get some bigger crowds. We've had a couple of bigger ones. We have Alec (Esenther) hitting home runs. We've got guys stealing bases."

Jack Anderson, the son of Five O's manager Bob Anderson, began tagging along with his father to Roosevelt Field at an early age.

He developed into an All-Classic 8 Conference performer for Oconomowoc High School and has been a linchpin in the Five O's resurgence.

He would love to see a huge contingent of Oconomowoc baseball fans check out the team's LOL playoff games this weekend.

"That would give me flashbacks to the high school playoffs and seeing all the kids come down for our playoff games," Anderson said. "I'm ready to see that again. I love that energy."

The Five O's had to toil in

See **RESURGENCE**, PAGE 2B



Mark Hutchinson/Enterprise Staff

Oconomowoc football coach Sal Logue addresses his team following one of its summer camp sessions at Rux Stadium. Logue believes this team has the potential to be the best he has coached at Oconomowoc.

PREP FOOTBALL PREVIEW

Raccoons dedicated to tackling challenge

Commitment pleases Logue

By Mark Hutchinson
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OCONOMOWOC — Oconomowoc football coach Sal Logue issued a challenge to his returning and incoming players following the completion of the Raccoons' 2022 season, during which they finished 4-5 overall and 2-5 in the Classic 8 Conference.

"We need to keep pushing, stick to the plan and stay the course," Logue said. "The other teams in our conference are not 'letting off the gas' in the offseason, and we can't, either.

"We play in the best conference in the state. We need to continue to develop more players who are strong enough, fast enough and physical enough to compete week-in and week-out. We need our players to push

2023 OCONOMOWOC FOOTBALL SCHEDULE	
Aug. 18: Watertown (Parents Night), 7 p.m.	(Youth Night, Booster Tailgate), 7 p.m.
Aug. 25: at Sussex Hamilton, 7 p.m.	Sept. 22: at Waukesha North, 7 p.m.
Sept. 1: Waukesha South, 7 p.m.	Sept. 29: Mukwonago (Homecoming), 7 p.m.
Sept. 8: at Kettle Moraine, 7 p.m.	Oct. 6: at Muskego, 7 p.m.
Sept. 15: Waukesha West	Oct. 13: Arrowhead (Senior Night), 7 p.m.

each other to be better.

"Just because someone was on the field this year does not guarantee that they will have that spot next year. We want competition because competition makes everyone better."

Next year has arrived.

The Raccoons began workouts last week and will scrimmage at West Bend at noon Friday before kicking off their season at 7 p.m. Aug. 18 against Watertown at Rux Stadium.

Logue has been pleased with the manner in which his players have tackled the challenge he presented to them last November.

"We have had a very good

start to our season, including camp and the first week of practice," Logue said. "We are a more lengthy and aggressive team all around."

Logue said during the team's July camp that Oconomowoc's 2023 squad could be the best he has coached since taking the helm of the program.

"We have had many really good football players during my time at OHS," Logue said. "I simply feel like we are deeper this year, and I believe it is a direct result of our weight room.

"I believe we have a

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Submitted photo by Suzie Meyer

Michael Zordani of the Oconomowoc Five O's fires a pitch toward the plate during a 2023 Land O' Lakes Baseball League game. Zordani came through with a strong outing Friday as Oconomowoc closed out its regular season with an 11-1 triumph at West Bend.

LAND O' LAKES BASEBALL

Reinforcements deliver at West Bend

O's close out regular season with victory

By Mark Hutchinson
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WEST BEND — Friday's final game of Oconomowoc's 2023 Land O' Lakes Baseball League regular season didn't impact the divisional standings.

But it did yield some encouraging words for the Five O's.

First, they discovered that they have some very capable reinforcements available to them.

Second, those reinforcements may come in handy as the team embarks on the 2023 LOL playoffs beginning this weekend.

Michael Zordani drew the starting pitching assignment and handcuffed the West Bend Spirits on one

Land O' Lakes Baseball League	Kettle Moraine Division	Brookfield Blue Sox	3-5	9-9
#Oconomowoc Five O's	6-2 13-4	Milwaukee Beavers	2-6	3-15
Rome Raiders	5-3 10-8	# Clinched division title		
Dousman Frogs	5-3 9-9	Friday's Results: Oconomowoc		
Genesee Rebels	2-6 5-13	Five O's 11, West Bend Spirits 1;		
East Troy Express	2-6 5-13	Menomonee Falls Lakers 6, Milwaukee Beavers 3		
Borderline Division		Saturday's Results: Kenosha		
#Kenosha Kings	6-2 11-7	Kings 5, West Allis Nationals 0;		
Waterford Rivermen	5-2 16-2	Kenosha Kings 11, Kewaskum A's 2;		
Milwaukee Heavy Hitters	5-3 12-6	Pewaukee Muskies 12, Merton		
Burlington Barons	3-5 7-11	Armets 7; Waterford Rivermen 11,		
Racine Kiwanis	0-8 3-15	Burlington Barons 1; Milwaukee		
Lake Country Division		Heavy Hitters 13, Racine Kiwanis 1;		
#Sussex Cardinals	10-0 17-1	Sussex Cardinals 4, Monches Irish 3;		
Monches Irish	7-3 14-4	Hartland Oilers 13, Stone Bank		
Pewaukee Muskies	5-5 7-11	Generals 9; Dousman Frogs 11, Gene-		
Hartland Oilers	4-6 5-13	see Rebels 6; Brookfield Blue Sox 9,		
Stone Bank Generals	3-7 5-13	Brookfield Bulldogs 7; Rome Raiders		
Merton Armets	1-9 2-16	8, East Troy Express 1		
Metro Division		Sunday's Playoff Results:		
#Brookfield Bulldogs	5-3 12-6	Brookfield Blue Sox 8, East Troy		
West Bend Spirits	5-3 11-7	Express 1; Milwaukee Beavers 5,		
Menomonee Falls Lakers	5-3 12-6	Burlington Barons 4; Racine Kiwanis		
		10, Hartland Oilers 6; Racine Kiwanis		
		10, Merton Armets 2; Genesee		
		Rebels 7, Stone Bank Generals 5		

run and four hits and two walks while striking out eight over five innings before Alex Amin and Ryan Brennecke threw scoreless and hitless ball over the remaining four frames in their first Five O's mound stints of the season.

Marek Bolson not only

caught the combined four-hitter, but went 3-for-5 including a triple, scored three runs and drove in another.

Amin and Brennecke contributed with their bats as well, going an aggregate

See **BASEBALL**, PAGE 2B

Five O's were big draw in years gone by

Playoffs attracted overflow crowds

By Mark Hutchinson
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OCONOMOWOC — Those were the days, my friends. We may never see anything quite like them again.

But how inspirational it would be if the 2023 Oconomowoc Five O's could witness a standing-room-only crowd encircling the fence surrounding Roosevelt Field, watching them in the Land O' Lakes Baseball League playoffs.

The community will have the opportunity to check out LOL playoffs this weekend.

The Five O's will meet the Milwaukee Beavers at 2 p.m. Saturday at Rome Park, and the winner will advance to play at 11 a.m. Sunday at Roosevelt.

Several men who have vivid memories of Five O's baseball bedlam were asked to share a few of them, and they did not disappoint.

Pat Leslie, who was inducted into the LOL Hall of Fame in 2009, was a standout second baseman for Oconomowoc in the 1970s and 1980s.

He helped the team capture three Land O' Lakes Grand Championships, three National Baseball Congress district titles, three Southern Wisconsin Amateur Baseball Association titles and eight first-place finishes during his era.

His memories of the Five O's following are indelible.

"In 1978, we were coming to the end of the season and had to beat a very good Hartland Oilers team on a Tuesday night at Hartland to get a tie for the Western Division championship," Leslie said. "That game was estimated to have close to 1,000 fans attending from all over the area."

A pitchers' battle between Oconomowoc's Max Weibel and Hartland's Joe Duncan saw the Oilers take a 1-0 lead before the Five O's Gary Bender executed a perfect squeeze play with one out to tie the score, and Don Jensen followed that with a run-scoring sacrifice fly to win the game.

That forced a one-game playoff between the 1977 league champion Pewaukee Muskies and the upstart



A large audience looks on as Oconomowoc players rush the field to celebrate a 1979 Land O' Lakes Baseball League playoff victory. Pictured are from left, Ron Athas, Windy Jensen, Mike Ryan and Dan Newhouse.

Five O's on a Thursday night at a neutral field — Nixon Park in Hartland.

Both teams had 16-5 records and were co-champions of the Western Division.

This game decided which team represented the West in the Grand Championship playoffs.

"We were shocked to see how many people were pouring into the park," Leslie said. "Both foul lines were stuffed. They even were standing behind the outfield fence. The bleachers were packed shoulder-to-shoulder, and a Pewaukee bar hired a plane to fly over the field with a banner reading, 'Cooney, you're gone.' That was insane!"

"The crowd was estimated to be between 1,500 to 2,000 fans. What a game they saw!"

Oconomowoc won that battle as Dave Schlosser outdueled Bill Beno for a 1-0 victory, and that Five O's group went on to win its first

Grand Championship.

"We used to have a booze raffle where fans could win a bottle or two and our regular home games had 300 to 400 fans in attendance," Leslie said. "The playoff games always drew packed houses."

"There was a sense of pride and an attachment to the players. Most of the team grew up in the Oconomowoc area, so our community felt a real connection to this new, winning team that played the game the way it was meant to be played."

Bob Anderson starred for Oconomowoc during their ensuing era in the 1980s and '90s. The bonds he developed to the program and its rich history motivated him to take over as manager in 2022, and he piloted the team to its first division title in 14 seasons this summer.

"Back in the 1980s and '90s, we had a great following of fans," Anderson said. "I remember the

old-timers would all sit behind the plate. Every game, there would be the same crew there. They knew us all by name and weren't shy about letting us know what we did right and wrong."

"We had a great fan base that would support us at home and on the road. It's always nice having people in your corner. They were part of the community and took pride in their team."

Five O's games and postgames were community events.

"I remember all our friends and girlfriends would come out and the games were kind of the appetizer, because the festivities would continue well past the games," Anderson said.

The Five O's captured LOL Grand Championships in 1999 and 2007.

Derek Nelson played on the latter of those title teams. He ranked second among the 2007 Five O's with a .387 batting average and 34

runs batted in.

Nelson remained with the Five O's through 2021 and assumed managerial duties toward the end of his career.

"During our stretch of successful seasons, the atmosphere was electric," Nelson said. "Everybody wanted to beat us. Our fans were awesome. We were like family."

"We would hang out with them, party with them and just appreciate each other. Going to the Five O's game and supporting us was the thing to do. We all had so much fun."

Nelson shared one of his fondest Five O's memories.

"One game that stands out has to be the Grand Championship in Cedarburg in 2007," he said. "Not only was it in Cedarburg against Cedarburg, but it was also the same day as the wine/harvest festival there. There were people everywhere full of excitement."

"Our fans traveled in full force. The backstop and fans were in close proximity to the players. It was packed all the way down to each foul line. Every pitch, every play was very intense."

Jeff Rhoads had a hand in every Five O's rally, scoring all three runs. He hit a solo home run in the first inning, singled in the fourth inning and scored on Josh Bouche's infield grounder, then tripled in the sixth and scored what proved to be the decisive run on Nelson's single.

The 3-2 triumph clinched Oconomowoc's 10th LOL Grand Championship and relegated Cedarburg to runner-up status for the second straight year.

The postgame scene left a lasting impression on Nelson.

"The Cedarburg fans and the Oconomowoc fans were so passionate and showed great sportsmanship," he said. "A couple of us Five O's players and the commissioner stopped at an establishment down at the end of the street before heading back to Oconomowoc."

"As soon as we walked in the door, we received a standing ovation from everyone in the place. It was unbelievable, especially being in Cedarburg. That just shows the passion and love for baseball. The respect and passion that is LOL baseball."

How great it would be if the Oconomowoc baseball community turns back its clocks for the Five O's 2023 playoff games.



Submitted photo by Suzie Meyer

Karsen Rupnow of the Oconomowoc Five O's swings into a pitch during a 2023 game. The O's wrapped up their regular season with an 11-1 victory over West Bend on Friday. They ran their record to 13-4 and earned the second seed in the Land O' Lakes Baseball League playoffs. They clinched their first divisional championship a week earlier with an 11-1 win over Genesee.

Baseball

From Page 1B

4-for-8, scoring four runs and knocking in three as Oconomowoc shellacked West Bend 11-1.

The O's completed regular-season play as the LOL's Kettle Moraine Division champions at 6-2 and improved to 13-4 overall, while the Spirits fell to 5-3 and 11-7, respectively.

"We had a lot of guys off last weekend," Oconomowoc manager Bob Anderson said. "Previous plans, switch off schedule. ... Either way, we are missing five of our regulars."

"We asked a few young guys to step in and fill some roles. Ryan Brennecke, Marek Bolson and Alex Amin contributed greatly to the victory.

"I can't say enough how thankful I am that we have youth like that coming through Oconomowoc."

The Five O's gained the upper hand by scoring three runs in the top of the second inning and never relinquished it. They tacked on two runs in the fourth and three in the fifth.

After the Spirits plated their lone run in the bottom of the sixth, Oconomowoc

tallied one insurance run in the eighth and two in the ninth and emerged with its third straight 11-1 victory and their sixth double-digit win of the season.

West Bend had worn out Oconomowoc pitching in seasons of the recent past, but that didn't happen Friday.

"Michael Zordani started on the mound and pitched 6 1/3 innings and was lights out," Anderson said. "Alex Amin came in for 2 2/3 any-ways, and Ryan Brennecke closed down the rest of the game."

Oconomowoc countered with its third consecutive potent hitting display.

Alec Esenther collected three hits in five at-bats and scored twice, while Zordani helped his own cause by going 2-for-5 with a run scored to complement the timely heroics of Bolson, Amin and Brennecke.

"We were able to capitalize on our 14 hits and 11 runs to come out of West Bend with a good victory that solidified us as the No. 2 seed in Land O' Lakes playoffs," Anderson said. "We play this Saturday at Rome against the Milwaukee Beavers at 2 p.m., and if we win, we will be playing at 11 a.m. Sunday in Oconomowoc."



Submitted photo by Suzie Meyer

Five O's catcher Sean Meyer sets the target for his pitcher during a 2023 Land O' Lakes Baseball League game.



Submitted photo by Suzie Meyer

Austin Meunier fires a relay throw during one of Oconomowoc's 13 Land O' Lakes victories this season.

Resurgence

From Page 1B

relative solitude to reach their current standing. They talked about the work that went into their climb.

"Some of our young guys don't know the struggles we've gone through over the past five or six years just trying to get nine guys to show up," Austin Meunier said. "Now we've taken the division and are looking good."

Meunier did enjoy a fringe benefit during that transitional phase. He was able to play alongside his father, Ron, whose games he used to watch as a toddler.

"We don't need my dad out there anymore, getting killed or dealing with his health issues and what not," Austin said. "It's awesome. I don't take any of these moments for granted, though"

Alec Esenther joined the ballclub during its lean, transition years also. "Sean and I and a few others came into the program when other guys were in their 40s, maybe 60s," Esenther said. "We definitely were leading the league in age and pulled hamstrings."

"Seeing that switch over to having a young team and building up from there, I enjoy being part of it. It's not just a ballclub bringing guys together; we're growing as a team and as a community."

When Bob Anderson and Tim Froemming took over the administration of the team in 2022, they provided a window of opportunity to the community's younger players, and through it streamed a ray of hope.

"I almost was a Dousman Frog before Bobby took over the Five O's," Meyer said. "I'm very happy to continue playing for Oconomowoc."

"A number of our dads grew up playing for Oconomowoc, so it's been fun to see them coming to watch us play and have Austin and Jack's dads (Ron Meunier and Bob Anderson) coaching. It's been cool to keep that connection going."

Austin Meunier echoed Meyer's sen-

timents.

"I've got to give huge props to Bob Anderson for getting these guys together, putting a team together," he said. "This is the second year he's had control of it, and we're at the top of our division."

Jack Anderson remembers when his father made the decision to take the helm.

"He jumped on it before I knew it," he said "Going into last summer, to keep the program alive, he said, 'I'm going to be taking control.'"

"I was like, 'Oh, OK! You're back coaching.' I'm happy we've gotten this far, and we're still going. If it wasn't for him, we wouldn't have a team."

The players acknowledged that last season represented a significant stride for the Five O's, but their quest didn't end there.

"I know all winter my dad was on my butt, telling me every day to talk to guys from Oconomowoc and getting them to play baseball in Oconomowoc," Jack Anderson said. "Seeing where we are now, we've passed our first goal. Now we're going to try to get our first playoff win together. And we'll go from there."

This season's divisional title conquest was the latest milestone the Five O's have passed, and they haven't let up on the accelerator.

"It's nice that we earned a (first-round playoff) bye," Meyer said. "We can throw our dog out there in our first game and ride (Max) Huseboe as far as he can take us."

"But we've shown that we can hit off anyone now. We hit (Rome's) Jake Tuttle two weeks ago and we hit a slow thrower (in an 11-1 win over Genesee on July 30). If we're going to win one, we might as well win the whole thing."

The Five O's know better than to get ahead of themselves. They were knocked off in the opening round of last year's playoffs on their home field by Merton.

"I think we've learned from past seasons that we have to take one game at a time," Esenther said. "We can't look past anyone. We just have to stay with-

in ourselves and take it at-bat by at-bat."

Meunier agreed. "Last year, we were just getting our bearings and getting our feet down," he said. "This year, it's always been in the back of our minds that we're going to make a run at this. We have the team to do it. Our bats are hot. Max is a dog."

"We have a shot at this."

Jack Anderson has heeded his father's sage advice when he shares tales of his own Five O's playoff heyday.

"The main advice he says is, 'Have fun,'" Jack said. "That's what we had trouble with last year."

"We just need to have fun. That's all we have to do."

Bob Anderson has enjoyed watching the Five O's do precisely that and grow as a team along the way.

"Going into last year, my main concern was getting a consistent group of guys on the field to put out a product that people would want to come and watch," he said. "We did that last season."

"This year, I don't go to bed at night wondering if I'm going to have a squad or not. I know I'm going to have anywhere from 10 to 16 guys available on a weekend. Guys still have opportunities to take a family vacation or do some personal stuff, but for the most part, they are truly committed."

The Oconomowoc skipper looks forward to seeing his program take its next voyage.

"We know the journey's not over," he said. "We know what our ultimate goal is, but yes, this is sweet. In life, you've got to have your goals, and you've got to have steps along the way."

"One of the main goals we had was to win our division. The next goal is to win a playoff game and take each game as it comes."

Here's hoping the Oconomowoc baseball community will be there to take notice.

(Enterprise sports editor Mark Hutchinson may be reached at mhutchinson@conley.net.com.)