Shepherd to battle Charleston

May 7, 2012
By Ben Gibson - For The Journal, journal-news.net

SHEPHERDSTOWN - Final exams are over and summer break has come to the students of Shepherd University, but the Rams baseball team is buckling down for a different kind of test as its enters the West Virginia Conference Championships.

"A little time off right now is doing us some good. It’s good to have some time to reflect on what we’ve done and what we need to do going forward," Shepherd coach Wayne Riser said.

Shepherd’s regular season ended last month and with a win over Pitt Johnstown, but the Rams will have to wait until Thursday before they can step on the diamond again to compete for a conference championship.

The Rams will face Charleston at 9:30 a.m. on Thursday. Seton Hill, the No. 1 overall seed, and West Virginia State are also in Shepherd’s pool. The Rams swept Charleston in a doubleheader on April 3, 2-1 and 8-1.

The Rams put together a 30-16 record and earned an eighth-place ranking in the NCAA II Atlantic Region Poll.

"We’ll have to do what we’ve done all year; compete hard, never give up. There isn’t a lot of quit in this team," Riser said.

Shepherd was no stranger to playing from behind this season, but its high-powered offense has kept the Rams in a number of high-scoring games with their .325 team batting average and 371 runs batted in for the conference second best offensive numbers behind the Seton Hill Griffins.

While the Griffins may have the Rams beat in a number of statistical categories, no one in the conference kept up with their home run production which was powered by first baseman Nathan Minnick.

Shepherd totaled 51 home runs this season to put it in the top five in the nation, with 21 of them coming off the bat of Minnick.

Minnick also posted a .500 batting average for the nation’s second best, while his average of .46 home runs per a game leads the nation.

While Minnick’s individual accomplishments have piled up this year, Riser knows his Rams can’t rely on one player.

"I’m proud of our guys. They’ve had a lot of individual accomplishments and everyone has gotten better, but it will take a team effort if we want to win." Riser said.

Shepherd also expects big contributions from its designated hitter, Nash Hutter, who is second on the team with 40 runs batted in.

The pitching staff will need Paul Hvozdovic and Andrew Gallant to lead the way, as well as their relief staff to keep games from turning into track meets as many of the Rams’ games have this season.

Shepherd has been absent from the WVC tournament since 2009 when it took home the title, but there have been changes to the tournament’s format since the Rams’ last outing.
"I think getting back to the tournament is a huge step that this team has took and earned," Minnich said. "From last year to this fall huge steps were taken to put us where we are. Also it puts the team back to its old tradition of making the tournament."

When Shepherd was last in the conference tournament, it was under double-elimination rules. The format changed last year when the conference changed it to pool play, where the top eight teams are split into two pools of four and each team plays each other once with the best team in each pool advancing.

Minnich isn't thrilled with the new format.

"I honestly don't like the new pool play style of the tournament because it leaves (out) the chance of the two best teams playing in the championship game," Minnich said. "I believe the two best teams are Shepherd and Seton Hill. Being in the same division, it can't turn out that way,"

No matter the tournament's format or who they play, Shepherd has a simple plan for success:

"Play and let it loose," Riser said. "We just have to go out and execute. We've beat all these teams before, and it will be all about going out there and executing."
WVIAC baseball has Shepherd facing Charleston

The eight qualifiers for the WVIAC baseball tournament that opens at Point Stadium in Johnstown, Pa. tomorrow are Seton Hill, West Virginia Wesleyan, Charleston, Alderson-Broaddus, Shepherd, Concord, Fairmont, and West Virginia State.

The teams from the North Division are Seton Hill (first), Alderson-Broaddus (second), Shepherd (third), and Fairmont (fourth). The teams from the South Division are (West Virginia Wesleyan (first), Charleston (second), Concord (third), and West Virginia State (fourth)).

The eight teams are divided with four squads placed in two different pools. There is round robin play in each of the pools and the two teams emerging with the best record from each will face each other in Sunday’s tournament championship game.

In one pool are Seton Hill, West Virginia State, Shepherd, and Charleston. The other pool has West Virginia Wesleyan, Fairmont, Alderson-Broaddus, and Concord.

Shepherd opens the tournament on Thursday with a 9:30 a.m. game against Charleston. Other Thursday games have Seton Hill facing West Virginia State, West Virginia Wesleyan meeting Fairmont, and Alderson-Broaddus playing Concord.

The Rams play Seton Hill at 4:30 p.m. on Friday and complete pool play with a 9:30 a.m. game against West Virginia State on Saturday.

Seton Hill is the top-ranked team in the Atlantic Region and finished with a 30-4 WVIAC record this season. The tournament champion receives a bid to the upcoming Atlantic Region tournament.

SU camps

Shepherd will hold a large number of sports camps for both boys and girls this summer. Coming in June and July will be camps for boys including basketball, baseball, football, and soccer. Summer camps for girls include softball, basketball, volleyball, and soccer. There will be co-ed soccer camps.

For other information or to register for one or more of the camps go to www.shepherdbook.com or call (304) 876-5219.

Enrollment is limited. Register your camper early to take advantage of early registration.
COLUMN: Nathan Minnich nears end of college baseball career at Shepherd University

By Lee Goodwin
The Record Herald

Waynesboro, Pa. — The Nathan Minnich watch is becoming more focused, even while the standout senior Shepherd University slugger continues to batter opposing pitchers.

The 2008 Waynesboro Area Senior High School graduate owns the school record for home runs in a season with 21. What’s more impressive is his batting average after 46 games. It’s .500. That means Minnich gets a hit every other at bat. He’s amassed 68 hits to date, including the 21 home runs to go with 10 doubles. The rest are singles, the staple of any batter hoping to hit for average.

His walk to strikeout ratio is impressive (50 walks to 20 strikeouts) and he leads the team by far in slugging percentage (.1.037) and on-base percentage (.647). In addition, Minnich has scored 63 runs and driven in 66, both tops on the team.

Minnich also leads the Rams in total bases (141), walks, hits and home runs.

It’s also interesting to note that Minnich hits lefties and righties about the same. He’s 17 for 36 against left handers and 51 for 100 against righthanded pitchers. Also, Minnich is batting .336 with runners in scoring position and is 3 for 5 with the bases loaded.

Shepherd begins play in the WVIAC tournament today against University of Charleston in Johnstown, Pa. The Rams play Seton Hill on Friday and West Virginia State on Saturday in the pool play tournament. The championship game is Sunday.

Minnich, a Tino Martinez Award and All-American candidate, is most certainly in conversations related to the 2012 amateur baseball draft. At 6-foot-3, 240 pounds, he’s highly scouted and highly touted for his ability as a power hitter. The question is not if he will be drafted but when will he be drafted? He’s been the subject of talk on the Major League Baseball Network and, no doubt, talked about at length in coffee shops and diners throughout the Mid-Atlantic region.

Back in the NCAA

For the second straight year, the Indiana University of Pennsylvania men’s golf team qualified for the NCAA championships.

The Crimson Hawks, of which 2009 WASHS graduate Derek Baker is a member, placed second out of 20 teams in the NCAA Division II Men’s Golf Atlantic/East Super Regional at the East Course of the Hershey Golf Club Wednesday.

Baker, who has been a mainstay with the team in now his junior year, tied for 20th in the regional with a 234 with rounds of 79, 81 and 84.

The NCAA championships will be held in Louisville, Ky. and marks the 29th appearance by IUP in the championship in program history.

Baker started the spring season in a tie for 17th place with rounds of 74 and 77 at the St. James Plantation Gold Invitational in North Carolina. He finished sixth at the Dr. Edwin B. Cotrell Invitational in West Chester, Pa. with rounds of 77 and 78, helping IUP to a win in the seven-team tournament.

IUP won its own golf invitational during which Baker finished in a tie for 32nd place with a 76-77-153.

The NCAA championships begin on May 15 at the Cardinal Club Course and continues through May 19 with the championship round.

Baker’s sister, Megan, will continue playing softball at Mount St. Mary’s after a remarkable career with the Maidens. Megan, a three-sport athlete at WASHS, also played volleyball and basketball. She also competes for the Heartbreakers travel softball team, based in Frederick, Md.

Power pitching

Former Waynesboro ace softball pitcher Taryn Ashway is doing yeoman’s work for Division I St. Joseph’s.

Now a junior for the Hawks, Ashway, the embodiment of a power pitcher, has been the No. 2 starter on the St. Joseph’s pitching rotation behind Erin Gallagher. The 2009 WASHS graduate helped St. Joe’s return to the Atlantic 10 tournament for the fifth year in a row and the 15th time overall. The sixth-seeded Hawks defeated third-seeded Temple 6-0 in the first round on Wednesday in St. Louis.

Through Wednesday, Ashway has a 2.61 earned run average and is 10-13 in 20 games (20 as a starter). She’s pitched 15 complete games and has struck out 112 batters while walking 24. Of the 121 hits she has allowed, only 22 have been for extra bases.

In Wednesday’s game, Greencastle-Antrim High School alum Rochelle Christman went 2 for 3, including a solo home run in the top of the seventh to make it 6-0.

St. Joseph’s takes on second-seeded Fordham at 4:30 p.m. (EDT) today. The winner advances to the semifinal round against the winner of Massachusetts-George Washington on Friday at 1 p.m.
Area Roundup: Charleston tops Rams in WVC tourney

May 11, 2012
journal-news.net

JOHNTOWN, Pa. - University of Charleston used a 21-hit attack en route to a 17-9 win over Shepherd University in West Virginia Baseball Tournament action at Point Stadium on Thursday.

Charleston took a 2-0 lead in the bottom of the first on a two-run single by John Schraer.

The Golden Eagles increased their lead to 4-0 with two runs in the third on an RBI-double by Igor Molina and a sacrifice fly by Schraer.

Shepherd cut the lead to 4-2 with a pair of runs in the fourth. Senior first baseman Nathan Minnick led off with a walk and senior designated hitter Nash Hutter launched a one-out homer to left.

Charleston plated four runs in the bottom of the frame with a two-run single by Schraer highlighting the rally.

The Rams rallied with three runs in the fifth to cut the lead to 7-5. An RBI triple by sophomore outfielder Aaron Scoville and a sacrifice fly by Minnick keyed the rally.

Ryan Easterling hit a two-run homer in the bottom of the fifth to increase the lead to 9-5.

Senior third baseman Travis Sluger belted a two-run blast in the sixth to cut the lead to 9-7.

The Golden Eagles answered back with a pair of runs off a two-run homer by Ryan Foster in the bottom of the inning.

Shepherd cut the lead to 11-9 in the eighth on a two-run single by sophomore outfielder Michael Lott.

Charleston sealed the win with six runs in the bottom of the eighth.

Schraer had a two-run double to key the rally.

Sophomore catcher Ryan Messina went 3 for 4 and scored two runs to lead the Rams.

Schraer was 3 for 5 with seven RBI, while Molina went 4 for 4 for the Golden Eagles.

Freshman starter Matt Copley took the loss to fall to 2-2. Tim Ponn (8-4) picked up the win for Charleston.

Shepherd fell to 27-20, while Charleston improved to 26-21. The Rams return to action on today when they face Seton Hill at 4:30 p.m.

Five Rams honored; Minnick named POY

PRINCETON - Five members of the Shepherd University baseball team were named to the 2012 WVC All-Conference team. Senior first baseman Nathan Minnick, senior relief pitcher Andrew Gallant and sophomore pitcher Paul Hvozdovic were first-team selections, while senior designated hitter Nash Hutter and junior second baseman Chad Murphy were second-team choices.

Minnick, who was named WVC Player and Hitter of the Year, has a
.500 batting average with 68 hits in 136 at-bats. He paces the Rams in hits (68), runs batted in (66), runs (63), total bases (141), walks (50), home runs (21), slugging percentage (1.047) on base percentage (.647) and batting average (.500).

Minnich leads NCAA Division II in batting average, on base percentage, slugging percentage, and home runs per game (0.46). He is ranked in the top six nationally in seven other categories. Minnich has set numerous career and season records this year.

Hvozdovic has posted a 10-3 mark and a save with a 2.86 ERA. He has a team-high of 74 strikeouts in 91.1 innings. His 10 wins and 15 starts tie the Shepherd single-season records.

Gallant has a 4-3 record and a team-best six saves with a 3.95 ERA. He has 53 strikeouts in 54 innings.

Hutter has a .325 batting average with 49 hits in 151 at-bats. He has 40 runs batted in and 38 runs scored.

Murphy is batting .372 with 54 hits in 145 at-bats. He has driven in 36 runs and scored 38. He had a team-best 14 doubles and three round-trippers on the year.