

Butler Eagle

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Series to slide into Butler Club baseball tourney will invade Pullman

The World Series is coming to town.

The National Club Baseball Association's Division II World Series, an eight-team double-elimination event, takes place at Pullman Park May 15 to 19.

This marks the second year for NCBA Division II play and defending champion Kentucky is back in the tournament field. Last year's World Series was in the state of Indiana.

"Pullman Park is the perfect venue for this tournament," said Kenny Rayl, director of Division II Baseball Operations who is based in Pittsburgh. "I've played in that ballpark. There's a lot of tradition and history there.

"Hopefully, we can add a little something to that."

The eight-team field consists of district champions throughout the country. There were 59 NCBA Division II teams this season.

While these aren't varsity collegiate programs, the teams are comprised of former high school players now attending these respective colleges. The players tried out for and made the club teams.

District champions and their overall records this season include the University of Wyoming (12-0), Virginia Commonwealth (14-1), Coastal Carolina (12-5), Lone Star College-Kingwood, Texas (20-2), Penn State (15-2), Southern Illinois-Carbondale (7-2), Kentucky (11-3) and Hofstra (7-4).

Kentucky is seeded sixth among the eight teams despite winning the title last year. All nine of the Wildcats' starters are back.

"We were only seeded seventh last year, so that doesn't bother us," team president Pete Jones said. "We went to the World Series last year hoping to see some good baseball, upset the No. 2 seed and were on our way."

World Series MVP Ben Manning returns as Kentucky's left fielder. The team has two stellar pitchers in Dean Sumpter and Brian Johnson. Both tied for third in NCBA Division II with 35 innings pitched. Johnson was second in the league with 44 strikeouts and Sumpter led the circuit with a 1.28 earned run average.

Like most NCBA teams, Kentucky did fundraising and used player dues to pay for its trip to Butler.

Lone Star College-Kingwood is the exception to that rule. The school is footing the bill for the team's airfare and hotel stay.

The team held open tryouts and chose the top 18 players out of 50. Sixteen of those players are coming to Butler. Center fielder Bryan Hunziker hit, which is

.500 good for second in NCBA Division II to Wyoming's Jordan Mette, who hit .525.

"Most of the teams in this tournament will be solid offensively," LSC-Kingwood coach Chris Schmitt said. "We expect a lot of runs to be scored."

The tournament will feature five of NCBA Division II's top 10 pitchers in strikeouts, five of the top 10 hitters in batting average and seven of the top 10 pitchers in earned run average.

"All of the teams will spend the tournament's first day watching the other games, seeing what the competition is like," Virginia Commonwealth coach Tim Grandy said."

Virginia Commonwealth is the No. 1 seed while Wyoming is No. 2.

Wyoming dropped baseball as a varsity sport as part of a Title IX move in 1996.

The Division II team is the lone baseball squad at the school.

"The University of Wyoming is the only four-year school in the state and we take pride in representing our school," coach Aaron Lazano said. "We funded \$4,000 toward the program ourselves and the university matched that.

"We play baseball the right way. Our pitchers don't walk people, we're solid defensively and our fundamentals are good."

Penn State has a varsity baseball program, along with a NCBA Division I team.

The Nittany Lions started the Division II program this year.

"Considering the size of our school, we have plenty of players to go around," PSU club baseball president Kris Park said. "We had 120 players show up for tryouts and we have a fall baseball program.

"Our team has been pretty dominant all year. There's a lot of talent there."

Coastal Carolina selected its 25-man roster from 60 players who tried out. The school's varsity team has been a Top 25 program this year.

"We have five losses, but we played mostly Division I teams during the year," coach Ryan Carlson said. "This is only our first year as a team and we're surprised and happy to be here, but we're not satisfied.

"We have a solid team all the way around, but I'm sure everyone else does, too. And nobody's making this trip to lose."

Day passes for the World Series are \$6 for adults, \$5 for students, \$4 for youths. Series passes are \$21, \$17 and \$13. Tickets will be available at Pullman

NCBA WORLD SERIES SCHEDULE

at Pullman Park

May 15

Game 1: 4-seed Coastal Carolina vs. 5-seed Penn State, 10 a.m.

Game 2: 3-seed LSC-Kingwood vs. 6-seed Kentucky, 1 p.m.

Game 3: 2-seed Wyoming vs. 7-seed Southern Illinois, 4 p.m.

Game 4: 1-seed Virginia Commonwealth vs. 8-seed Hofstra, 7 p.m.

May 16

Game 5: Loser Game 3 vs. Loser Game 2, 10 a.m.

Game 6: Loser Game 4 vs. Loser Game 1, 1 p.m.

Game 7: Winner Game 3 vs. Winner Game 2, 4 p.m.

Game 8: Winner Game 4 vs. Winner Game 1, 7 p.m.

May 17

Game 9: Winner Game 5 vs. Loser Game 7, 4 p.m.

Game 10: Winner Game 6 vs. Loser Game 8, 7 p.m.

May 18

Game 11: Winner Game 7 vs. Winner Game 9, 10 am.

Game 12: Winner Game 8 vs. Winner Game 10, 1 p.m.

Game 13: Winner Game 11 vs. Loser Game 11, 4 p.m.

Game 14: Winner Game 12 vs. Loser Game 12, 7 p.m.

May 19

Game 15: Winner Game 13 vs. Winner Game 14, 7 p.m.