And then ... There were 8

Brooklawn, N.J., Waipahu, Hawaii, return to Shelby World Series

CARL HENNELL
WSJ EDITOR

SHELBY, N.C. — You’ve heard of Williamsport, Penn., and Omaha, Neb., because of their affiliation with the Little League and College World Series. In a few years, Shelby, N.C., will become synonymous with those two cities because of the success of the fairly-new permanent home of the American Legion Baseball World Series.

The 87th annual American Legion Baseball World Series — the third straight here in Shelby — is set to be another record-breaking series after last summer witnessed nearly 102,000 baseball fans converge on the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. Many renovations have been made to Keeter Stadium and event organizers are expecting another record-setting event.

As far as the baseball teams go, there are two newcomers to the ALWS with Burnsville, Minn., and Petaluma, Calif. Three teams are making their second appearances. And three teams — Brooklawn, N.J., Gonzales, La., and Branford, Conn. — have a combined 20 years of ALWS experience.

Action starts on Friday at 9:30 a.m. with Burnsville, Minn., facing Napoleon, Ohio. Napoleon has been to one ALWS, in 2001, but did not win a game. So no matter what, an ALWS first will happen with the outcome of the game.

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You’ve been either a fan of, or playing, American Legion baseball for a few years now, but do you know what the American Legion is?

The American Legion was created in 1919 by veterans of World War I to help men and women, who were returning home from war physically and mentally changed, reacclimate to the civilian world. There are many divisions of the American Legion that advocate for various aspects of military veterans' affairs. Those aspects range from centers of health care, education, career, family assistance and financial support to committees that promote Americanism (like baseball, shooting sports, oratorical contests, Boys & Girls State/Nation, flag etiquette and citizenship) and community services like the Legion Riders — which is a chapter of motorcycle riders who are well known for their charitable work that has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for local children’s hospitals, schools, veterans homes, severely wounded servicemembers and scholarships — not to mention staging a presence to thwart protesters at military funerals.

In conjunction with services to veterans, the American Legion also puts together national youth programs. Baseball is just one of them: Boys State, Oratorical and shooting are others. But why youth programs?

The purpose of the youth programs is to instill teamwork, confidence, sportsmanship, citizenship in democracy and the importance of fitness in America’s younger generations.

The Legion chose to lead youth programs because it saw that in order to be successful as an organization, it needed to focus on community service and these programs were the best way to get involved in each individual community across the county.

The American Legion chartered its baseball program in 1925 to promote Americanism. Since 1926, the American Legion has sponsored the American Legion Baseball World Series. To put that date in perspective, the Little League World Series started in 1947, meaning the ALWS is 21 years older. One reason why the LLWS is more popular, though, is because the ALWS moved from city to city every year, meaning no consistency was established. That, however, has changed. In 2010, the American Legion announced that Shelby, N.C., will host the ALWS for the foreseeable future.

Do you know a combat veteran? If so, you probably know about the mental issues he or she is dealing with (whether they are hiding them in their mind or letting them out). Whatever the case, we all need to support them in their reacclimation to society because they experienced the atrocities of war for the sake of all of us.

Brooklawn, N.J., lost 2012 championship

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At 1 p.m. Petaluma, Calif., plays Gonzales, La. Gonzales is making its sixth ALWS appearance. It has a 10-10 record here and has placed second and third. All five of its previous appearance came between 1988 and 1996.

In a rematch of a 2011 ALWS first-round game, Waipahu, Hawaii and Brooklawn, N.J. square off at 5 p.m. That 2011 first-round game was full of late-game fireworks as Brooklawn erased a 2-0 deficit in the eighth inning and then scored the winning run on a one-out, walk-off single in the bottom of the ninth in a 3-2 victory. This is Waipahu’s second ALWS appearance after going 0-2 in 2011. It brings 3 boys back from that team. Brooklawn is no stranger to the ALWS or Shelby. It has appeared in the last three ALWS here in Shelby and lost last summer’s championship game. The only team to beat the Bulldogs last year was the New Orleans national champions. This is Brooklawn’s 13th appearance at the ALWS, where it has compiled a 33-22 record with two national championships, two second-place finishes and four third-place finishes.

In Friday’s nightcap, Branford, Conn., will face Wilmington, N.C. Branford is making its fourth ALWS appearance, all since 2005. It has a 3-6 record here with one third-place finish. This is Wilmington’s second trip here. It went 1-2 in 1970.
Rain expected this weekend

SHELBY, N.C. — Patience may be tested at the 2013 American Legion Baseball World Series because Mother Nature is not expected to cooperate with baseball.

The foothills of the North Carolina Appalachian Mountains have been getting drenched this summer, with around 40 to 50 inches of rain. It is supposed to continue this weekend.

According to The Weather Channel, at 10 a.m. on Friday there is a 50 percent chance of showers and mid-60-degree temperatures. On Saturday and Sunday nights, there is a 60 percent chance of showers.


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All roads lead to Shelby

3 teams go unbeaten at regionals.

Hawaii crawls back from first-round loss

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At the Northeast Regional in Middletown, Conn., Branford ousted the host team in the undefeated game, taking a 4-0 lead en route to a 6-5 victory. It absorbed a loss to Worcester, Mass., in the semifinals but then beat that same team 12-2 in the championship. Branford outscored its 5 opponents 59-39 but comes into the ALWS with the worst team ERA from regionals, allowing more than seven earned runs per game. Its team batting was third best, with 15 extra-base hits. Tyler Crisculo and Tyler Forgione each hit .500 or better. Nicholas Perrelli hit .455 with 4 doubles, a home run and 13 RBIs.

At the Mid-Atlantic Regional in New Jersey, Brooklawn, NJ, went 5-0, outscoring its opponents 49-18. Nick Cieri hit .500 or better. Nicholas Perrelli hit .455 with 4 doubles, a home run and 13 RBIs.

At the Southeast Regional in Ashboro, NC, Wilmington beat the host team in both the undefeated game and the championship game. It outscored opponents 44-16 en route to a 5-0 record. Ten of those runs allowed came in the semifinal game, where it eliminated Charlottesville, Vir., 11-10. Pitcher Bryan Sammons anchors the top pitching staff coming out of regionals. In 14 innings pitched, Sammons spread out 11 hits and 8 walks while striking out 18. He earned a complete game shutout and didn’t allow any runs in two games. Matt Davis backed him up by spreading 5 hits and 4 walks over 7 innings while striking out 10 in another victory.

At the Mid-South Regional in Little Rock, Ark., Gonzales, La., beat Tepic, Miss., 6-5 in the undefeated game and then Midwest City, Okla., 5-1 in the championship. It lost a semifinal game to Blue Springs, Mo., to make Midwest City play Blue Springs for a berth into the clipper. Gonzales outscored opponents 39-21 on the strength of the second-best pitching and second-best fielding team at regionals. Austin Tanner, Cole Stapler, Austin Millot and Austin Bain had more than 1 strikeout per inning pitched. Grant McCrory hit .500 with 4 doubles to lead the fifth-best batting team.

At the Great Lakes Regional in Terre Haute, Ind., Napoleon, Ohio, outscored opponents 43-30 but comes into the ALWS with the same team 12-2 in the championship. Napoleon lost a semifinal but then beat that second-best pitching and championship game. It eliminated Charlottesville, Va., 6-5 in the undefeated game, taking a 4-0 lead en route to a 6-5 victory. It absorbed a loss to Worcester, Mass., in the semifinals but then beat that same team 12-2 in the championship. Branford outscored its 5 opponents 59-39 but comes into the ALWS with the worst team ERA from regionals, allowing more than seven earned runs per game. Its team batting was third best, with 15 extra-base hits. Tyler Crisculo and Tyler Forgione each hit .500 or better. Nicholas Perrelli hit .455 with 4 doubles, a home run and 13 RBIs.

At the Central Plains Regional in Fargo, ND, Burnsville, Minn., went 5-0 and outscored opponents 38-18. They beat Eden Prairie, Minn., and Carroll County, Iowa by one run in the second round and undefeated game. As far as team totals compared to the rest of the ALWS teams at regionals, Burnsville is in the middle of the pack in all three categories. Tyler Hanson hit .563, while Bo Hellquist and Eric Watters each hit better than .400. Aaron Rozek struck out 13 in 15 innings en route to going 2-0.

At the Northwest Regional in Eugene, Ore., Waipahu, Hawaii, came back from a first-round loss to Idaho Falls and outscored opponents 66-35. It 10-runned the losers’ bracket in coming into the ALWS. Salas had 5 doubles. Jaraad Salas, Brent Sakurai and Austin Stapler, Austin Millet and Austin Bain had more than 1 strikeout per inning pitched. Grant McCrory hit .500 with 4 doubles to lead the fifth-best batting team.

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