



Woodstock 9-year-old team savors CABA experience

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CRYSTAL LAKE – Woodstock GWBA entered Thursday's game against the New Lennox Hawks in the Continental Amateur Baseball Association 9-Year-Old World Series having had its first practice three weeks ago.

The team was put together by the Greater Woodstock Baseball Association, an organization founded a year ago by Steve Otten, Dan Happ and Craig Krandel.

Otten, who is Woodstock's coach, had not coached 9-year-olds in several years and had modest expectations about his newly formed team. "What I really cared about was being competitive," Otten said. "I didn't come into this looking to win a game, I just wanted to be respectful and competitive."

The team has done much more than compete. Woodstock improved its tournament record to 4-3 with a 10-1 victory against the Hawks. Woodstock was led by pitcher Mike Kaska, who allowed one run in five innings.

The GWBA 9-year-old team was put together specifically to compete in the CABA World Series, and it has allowed the players to have an enjoyable experience.

"I really like it," Owen Siddons said. "I like playing all the teams from the different states and getting the pins and stuff."

Ben Haulotte said he likes when all the fans cheer for him, and Mike Chonos said he enjoys the competitiveness of the tournament.

"It's really hard," he said.

Otten's coaching philosophy with the young players has centered around positive reinforcement. "In my opinion, it is the most important thing you can do, is to keep positive," Otten said.

"We don't go out there and scream negativity at these kids. You have to hold yourself in check, because they can be fragile."

Happ said the GWBA will continue to work with CABA to expand the program, allowing more games and events for Woodstock teams.

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