

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Before any of the three other Chase County teams compete in their first contests this weekend, the Lady Longhorn softball team will already have six games in the books.

The team traveled to Southern Valley twice last week for a pair of triangulars, and were in Holyoke, Colo., Tuesday this week for another double-header.

Chase County lost three of the four games in their first week of play. The fourth, last Thursday against Grand Island Central Catholic, was “suspended” when the game was called due to weather. CCS was ahead 9-6 when it was called, so it’s hoped the game can be finished before districts.

Coach Denise Smith said she is still moving players around in three positions—second base and left/right field, which are being filled with new players this season.

Those are the weak spots right now, but she is hoping to solidify those positions soon.

Anna Bauerle will be the varsity starting pitcher, and was on the mound for all four games last week.

Ally Vrbas returns as catcher, Cassie Burpo is at first, Jodi Koellner returns to third, Abbi Vetter is at short and Michaela Space is in center.

Claire Kuenne and Jessica Hartman have been sharing duties at second, while Emma Mollendor, Emily Johnston, Jasmine Laird, Shelby Bigham and Faith Reinke have been in left and right fields.

Senior Jordan Gibb will be out all season with a nerve problem in her arm, and Blair Hartman is recovering from a broken finger and will be out another three weeks or so, Smith said.

Home opener Thursday

The Lady Longhorns will host Southern Valley for a varsity double-header today (Thursday), their first contests at home. First pitch at Schroeder Park will be at 4 p.m.

On Friday, varsity and JV games will also be played here against the team from Perry, Okla., coached by Imperial native Bryan Hayes. He is the son of Randy and Margene Hayes.

The varsity game will be played first at 6 p.m., followed by a five-inning JV game.

On Tuesday, Sept. 4, the team will travel to Wray, Colo., for a JV double-header starting at 4:30 p.m.

Openers at So. Valley

Chase County dropped both games at Southern Valley last Tuesday, Aug. 21, in their season openers.

Facing Blue Hill in the first game, the Lady Longhorns lost a 12-0 contest in three innings.

The team tallied just two singles from Ally Vrbas and Jodi Koellner in the first inning, while Blue Hill racked up six singles and two doubles.

Coach Smith said her team gave Blue Hill too many free opportunities on base as the Lady Longhorns committed six errors, along with four walks and two hit batters.

“And, Blue Hill hit the ball well,” she said.

On the mound, Bauerle struck out two, walked four and gave up eight hits.

In the second outing against Southern Valley, Chase County did better, Smith said, jumping out to a 4-0 lead after a couple of walks and a triple from Abbi Vetter that scored three.

But, Southern Valley also had a good first inning at the plate, scoring 10 runs in that first at-bat.

After a scoreless second for both teams, Chase County added two more in the third, but Blue

Hill scored four in their half and another two in the fourth to end the game.

Southern Valley took the 16-6 win after four innings.

Offensively for Chase County, Vetter led the hitting with a double and a triple. Tallying singles were Vrbas (2), Bauerle, Emily Johnston and Michaela Space.

On the mound, Bauerle walked seven, gave up 11 hits and had no strikeouts.

Smith said her team played much better this game, but made some errors that were costly including a number of easy pop-ups that were missed.

So. Valley Aug. 23

In a return trip to Southern Valley last Thursday, Chase County lost to the hosts, 12-4, then had a lead against Central Catholic before the game was called due to weather.

Against Southern Valley, the Lady Longhorns again had a strong first inning, scoring three runs on three singles as nine came to bat.

Southern Valley managed just one run in their half of the first, but responded in the second with nine runs as Chase County suffered through some errors and a string of six consecutive Southern Valley hits.

The Lady Longhorns put one more run across in the third, before losing 12-4 after six innings.

Chase County had six hits in the game—a double from Vetter and singles from Bauerle (2), Vrbas, Koellner and Space.

That was matched by 15 Southern Valley hits. Pitcher Anna Bauerle struck out one and walked seven.