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By Dennis Garcia

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ASHEBORO - The first year for any baseball program which features a new head coach normally experiences ups and downs. There are usually new philosophies, new ways of doing certain aspects of the game and the players need time to learn the new coach and the coach needs time to learn the players.

That's normally.

Randolph County Post 45 had a new head coach this summer in Andrew Connor, but Connor, a longtime assistant coach to previous head coach Ronnie Pugh, changed very little and the team had another successful American Legion baseball season.

Post 45, which captured the Area III Northern Division title, earned a first-round bye in the postseason and dispatched Queen City in a second-round sweep before falling one round shy of qualifying for the American Legion State Tournament after falling to Union County 3-1 in the best-of-five series.

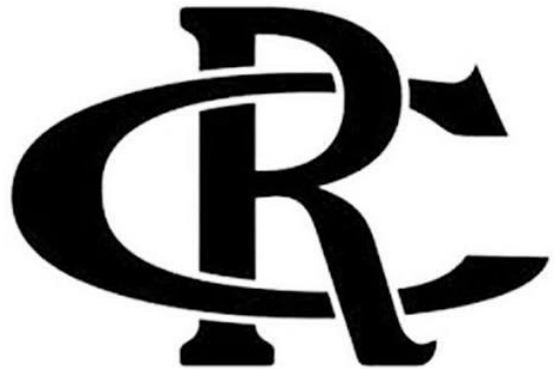
Randolph County finishes the year 19-6 overall after an 11-1 conference finish and a 16-3 regular-season.

"I think the kids had a lot of fun and enjoyed each other," Connor said. "The common thing between them is they said it was the most fun they have had on a baseball field. It was a lot of fun being around the kids and see how kids from different schools come together and form a team in the summer. How they play for each other."

Post 45 once again was made up of players who enjoyed stellar high school seasons.

"It was fun seeing the different styles from each high school," Connor said. "See what works for each school and work with that. The common thing from each team is the mentality about winning and losing. They hate losing and love winning."

Post 45 did plenty of winning this season, bolting out to a 4-0 record before dropping back-to-back games to Rowan County, 3-1 and 11-8. Randolph County then went on a 10-game winning streak to improve to 14-2.





*Post 45 coach Andrew Connor.*

Six-straight games of scoring at least 10 runs ended with a shutout loss to Chatham County before Post 45 rebounded with a wild 14-10 win over Davidson County and an 8-4 win over Moore County to close the regular season.

"The kids handled a lot of it for us on the field," Connor said of making things easier for himself and assistant coaches Ryan Hill, Grat Dalton and Morgan Frazier.

"They come to play every day. I say we had a lot of leaders who didn't need direction."

Connor also wanted to send a big thank you to the Kiwanis Club of Asheboro, who once again sponsored the team.

"A lot of other teams I have talked to are so aggravated with everything they have to go through just to get a team on the field," Connor said. "There are so many hoops and loops to go through. The one thing that surprised me the most is how well Post 45 is taken care of by Kiwanis. Without their support, it would be a far more difficult and daunting task."