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ASHEBORO - With Randolph County Post 45 once again hosting the American Legion Southeast Regional Tournament at McCrary Park beginning August 7, there will be quite a long period of time between the end of the regular season and the start of the postseason.

And although veteran Post 45 coach Ronnie Pugh said he'd rather be playing, maybe the rest will be beneficial to a team that saw a high number of injuries throughout the regular season.

Randolph County will enter SER action after posting an 11-12 regular season, the first time in 10 years Post 45 did not have a winning regular season.

"Take it as it is, take a few days off and get back at it," Pugh said. "We need a little rest, a little time off. Then this team needs some time to practice. We haven't had a lot of time to practice once we got everyone here."

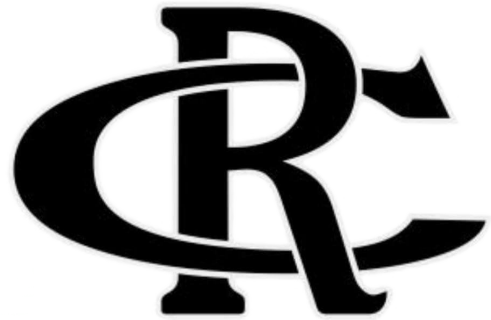
Post 45 finished third in the four-team Area III Northern Division, being eliminated from playoff contention in the second-to-last game of the season. High Point and Davidson County were the two playoff representatives from the Northern Division with both advancing to the Area III championship, which is being played out now.

Post 45 started the season with a win over Mocksville-Davie, one of two playoff representatives from the Area III South Division, but that win was followed by four straight losses. And despite regrouping to run its record to 8-7 after a 2-1 win over Berkeley, WV., on June 21, Post 45 never could string anything together. Four times this season, Post 45 won back-to-back games, but it never could manage a three-game winning streak.

"Losing is never easy," Pugh said. "We never put it together for multiple games in a row. I think you have seen that throughout Legion, people not having a consistent lineup."

Unlike most years, Post 45 struggled offensively early in the season. They averaged just under four runs per game until a late-season stretch saw Post 45 score 42 runs in its final seven games to finish with a 4.6 runs-per-game average. However, Post 45 managed just two runs per game in key contests down the stretch, losing 7-2 to High Point and 4-2 to Davidson County.

"I thought we improved as the season went on and the last couple of weeks, when it really counted, we had a lot of base runners," Pugh said. "We just didn't do a good job of getting



timely hits. If you don't get better at that, you won't win. We are a lot less physical than we have been the last few years. That comes with age and maturity. But we've been a lot more aggressive and hopefully that will carry over."

Post 45 has dealt with its share of injuries as well. Carter Brown, who missed the season because of an injury sustained in the high school season, Trey Kennedy, who had a knee injury, Caleb Stickle, the number three hitter who missed the last few weeks because of injury and Connor Adams, who injured his wrist and has been unable to play the field, all missed time.

Pitching hasn't been a problem as Austin Lemons, Parker Kines, Brett Smith, Drew Harmon, Samuel Asbill and Jake Riddle led a group that included others as well.

Lemons, a Randleman High School graduate who was at UNCG last season, is expected to start Game 1 of the SER if he's healthy. He was injured late in the season and Pugh is hoping the time off will help in his recovery.

The SER will feature state championship teams from Florida, Alabama, South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia and North Carolina along with Post 45 and a representative from Puerto Rico. Post 45 is scheduled to meet Virginia in its opening game on August 7.