

Skowhegan a strong host for Cal Ripken tourney

The town is successfully hosting its first regional tournament.

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SKOWHEGAN — The New England 11-year old Cal Ripken tournament currently unfolding at Skowhegan's Carl R. Wright Baseball Complex is the first New England regional hosted by the town. Larry Carter, the state assistant commissioner of Cal Ripken for the last 13 years, said Skowhegan has been a strong host.

"Skowhegan's got a great core of people here helping," Carter said. "It's a great atmosphere. They're really making the kids feel welcome. They've done a great job."

Skowhegan has hosted numerous state baseball tournaments at the Wright Complex since it opened in 1995. Carter, a Casco resident, has run nine New England Cal Ripken tournaments hosted in Maine. The New England tournament can be a shot in the arm to local economies. Carter estimated each team visiting from out of state spends approximately \$1,000 per night just on lodging.

Crowds have been good at the tournament, Carter said. Monday evening's attendance was a little down because Skowhegan had advanced through the winner's bracket and earned a bye. When Skowhegan played, a few hundred local fans came out to support the team.

"Skowhegan fans flooded the place pretty good," Carter said.

The Wright Complex has three ballfields, but for the first few days of the tournament, only one was used. Monday was the first day games were played simultaneously on two fields.

"We try to use one (field) so it's the fair for all sides," Carter said.

While the New England regional winner in the 10 and 12-year old tournaments advances to the Cal Ripken World Series in Aberdeen, Maryland, the season for the 11-year olds ends with the New England tournament. With no World Series bid at stake, New England is the only region that has an 11-year old tournament, Carter said.

“It gives kids more time to play,” Carter said. “I’m surprised other regions haven’t started doing it, too.”

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Thunderstorms hit Skowhegan shortly after 6 p.m. Monday, suspending play in two elimination games.

Barrington, N.H. and Marlboro, Mass. will continue their game, while Andy Valley and Hartford, Vt. also will resume play at 3:30 p.m.

The winners bracket game between Skowhegan and River Valley, Mass. will begin at 5:30 p.m.

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Andy Valley and Hartford, Vt. were scoreless in the third inning when play was halted on Monday. Each team benefited from a key double play.

In the top of the first inning, Hartford had the bases loaded with one out. Andy Valley got a strikeout for the second out, and a Hartford runner was picked off third base to end the inning.

In the bottom of the second inning, Andy Valley had a runner on first base with nobody out. A bunt attempt was popped up and caught, and the runner was thrown out before he could get back to first base.

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