

The History of Post 218 Baseball

Better late than never.

American Legion baseball had been played in Missouri for 18 years before it caught on in this area.

Teams from St. Louis, Kansas City, Springfield, Cape Girardeau and Wellston had won state titles since the Missouri Department joined in 1929.

Washington Post 218 added its first team for the 1947 season. Washington joined along with Sullivan, New Haven, Union and Marthasville to form a league.

Bernard Jett, the Post 218 athletic chairman, advertised the tryouts for the inaugural team. All boys 17 years or under on Jan. 1, 1947, were eligible to play for the team.

Organized, Johnny Breeden served as Washington's inaugural manager and he was assisted by Oscar Withoelder and Sebastian Nowicki.

The Washington Missourian reported "A large turnout was present last Saturday at the first tryout Sunday, June 15, 1947, and some very promising talent showed up."

Making the team were Tommy Neher, Robert Stuesse, Norbert Unnerstall, Davis Voss, Richard Holtmeyer, Jack Quigle, Julius Lause, Paul Moosmann, Cuthbert Sellmeyer, Virgil Gerner, Lester Eckelkamp, Richard Marquart, Paul Zoellner, Robert Schroepfer, Orville Unnerstall and Kenneth Klemm.

The team was sponsored by the Washington Motor Company with Ike Bocklage as the local representative. The Washington squad called East End Diamond (now McLaughlin Field) their home.

The team's first game scheduled against Sullivan, but as the Missouri weather is apt to do, a downpour hit 10 minutes before the team was slated to leave and the field was rendered unplayable. Rain was a problem in June of 1947 and games didn't start to be played until July.

The teams finally got to play and Washington won, 22-8.

Sullivan drew three walks to start and took a 2-0 lead before Richard Marquart struck out the next six batters.

Sellmeyer went 2-3 with two home runs to lead the Washington offense.

Norbert "Nibby" Unnerstall reached base six times with three singles, a triple and two walks.

In the second game, Washington defeated Union, 23-6. Moosmann had four hits, including a double. Nibby Unnerstall had three singles, a double and a home run. Holtmeyer posted four hits with a double.

"Diminutive Bob Stuesse turned in the fielding play of the day making a sparkling back hand catch of a hard line drive between short and third," The Missourian reported.

Washington won the local league after winning its first two games.

"The local Legion nine was declared champs of this region after playing only two games. The league was late in starting and after they were rained out several Sundays in a row, it is impossible to play the regular schedule, so by virtue of their two overwhelming victories, they were more or less automatically awarded the championship of the league," The Missourian reported.

Post 218 advanced to the Ninth District best-of-three series against O'Fallon.

The St. Charles County team won the series, two games to one. After O'Fallon won in the opener, 6-3, the series moved to Washington's City Park Field (later Ronsick Field). Washington won, 9-8, with Orville Unnerstall's grand slam in the bottom of the eighth inning being the difference.

O'Fallon won the final game back in St. Charles County, 12-1, to advance to the Western Division championship series against Sedalia. The winner of that went to the state tournament in St. Joseph, where St. Louis won the department title.

While Washington's postseason ended then, the team continued to play games. The Aug. 7, 1947, Missourian details a 25-1 win over Union. A week later, the team beat Marthasville, 20-9.

Following a successful first year, the team returned for 1948, a year in which Washington Post 218 hosted the Ninth District Convention.

The next big achievement for the Post 218 program was its first state title, earned in 1957. Washington became the first team from outside of Missouri's bigger metropolitan areas (St. Louis, Kansas City, Springfield and Cape Girardeau) to win an American Legion state title.

The 1957 team went 14-3 with all three losses coming at the state or regional tournaments.

"This team was the forerunner of all of the other state championship teams which have followed in Washington," said Tom Dill. "We were the guys who showed Washington could do it."

Dill, who went on to coach East Central College's baseball team for many years, was a starting outfielder with the 1957 team.

There already was a buzz around baseball in Washington. St. Francis Borgia finished second in the MSHSAA Baseball Championship, falling to Ritenour in the title game, 4-0. However, many of the Borgia players weren't eligible to play for Post 218.

"We had different age groups then," Dill said. "Players like the Baumkers (Gil and Wil) and Paul Wessel couldn't play. I don't think you could be over 17 by August. I just missed being able to play another year."

The Baumker brothers went on to play in the Chicago Cubs organization while Wessel played for Kingsport in the Baltimore system.

Still, Manager Henry "Heine" Voss was able to field a potent lineup.

Normal starters were Jim Wunderlich at catcher, Bob Dieckhaus at first base, Jim Voss at second base, Bill Coons at third base, Jim Coons at shortstop and Tom Dill, Ed Hambach and Clifford Aitch in the outfield.

Aitch was a trailblazer in Washington. He attended the Crispus Attucks School and was one of its final eighth-grade graduates before the Washington School District was integrated. He graduated in 1959 and went on to a long coaching

career in Detroit. He was inducted to the Detroit Coaches Hall of Fame and the Washington School District's WINGS Hall of Honor.

The 1957 team featured a potent 1-2 pitching punch of Gerald Wehmueller and Ken Dyson.

"We had two of the best pitchers," said Wunderlich. "Jerry Wehmueller went to Missouri University, but didn't play baseball there. Ken Dyson went on and played in the minor leagues. They were excellent pitchers for their age. Based on today's selection, they would get picked. They were very much the equivalent or better than the pitchers of today. Wehmueller had a natural moving slider for a left hander. He was only a senior in high school and he threw fast for the time, probably 85-90 mph."

Reserves were Herb Dill, Tom Buhr, Denny Marquart and Tom McDonald.

Others involved with the team included Post 218 Commander Clarence Schopp, Post 218 Representative Ed Vedder, Public Relations Specialist Bernie Jett, Scorekeeper Jerry Luecke and Batboy George Coons.

"I remember that we had good support from the Washington Post with uniforms, lunch and refreshments," said Denny Marquart. "They really supported us."

Practices opened at East End Diamond in the middle of May with 13 players out for the team. There was plenty of optimism for the Post 218 program.

Minus regulars Tom Dill, Jim Wunderlich and Jim Voss, Washington's star was Gerald Wehmueller, who held Wentzville to two hits and struck out 19 batters. Offensively, Post 218 had 13 hits and took advantage of 13 Wentzville errors.

In Washington's next game, Ken Dyson, who had been used mainly in a relief role in 1956, got a 14-1 win over Union. Dyson scattered eight hits (five infield hits) and allowed one run while going the distance. Jim Coons, Bill Coons, Jim Wunderlich and Ed Hambach combined for 10 hits in the game. Hambach drove in three runs.

Twice, Post 218 defeated Union teams, 4-3. Washington needed 11 innings to beat Union's Legion team and also won by the same score in an exhibition against Union's Khoury League team.

"When we played the Union Khoury League team, it was a night game," Dill said. "We thought that was big time. We got to play at night like the Buds."

The Union club had a storied past, being formed by retired Major League players Charlie Grimm and Jim Bottomley.

"We saw Jim Bottomley and Charlie Grimm a lot," said Wunderlich. "We had six or seven scouts following us."

In the playoffs, Washington first matched up against Overland's Thoman-Boothe Post 338. The series was a rematch of sorts of the high school state title game as many Ritenour players were on the Overland team.

"In the eyes of many observers at St. Louis this turn of events was the biggest since David of biblical fame knocked off Goliath." Luecke wrote in *The Citizen*.

Washington won the first game, 4-3, and sealed the series with a 1-0 victory.

In the opener in Washington, Overland was cruising with a 3-0 lead before Post 218 rallied in the seventh inning.

A hit by Jim Wunderlich and an error gave Washington two runs. In the eighth, Post 218 tied it when Tom Dill doubled home Ed Hambach.

In the ninth, Bill Coons led off with a walk. Gerald Wehmueller hit a ground rule double, putting runners at second and third with Jim Voss coming to the play.

Washington ran the squeeze play and Coons was safe at the plate for the winner. Coons scored twice in the game for Washington, which was held to five hits.

"On the squeeze play, the coach at third told me when to go," Coons said. "I had to wait so I didn't leave too soon."

In the second game, played in Maplewood, Washington got just three hits, but Bob Dieckhaus scored the game's only run as Dyson shut out Overland, 1-0.

Ron Hunt, who went on to enjoy a career in the Major Leagues from 1963-74, doubled in the first inning to become the only Thoman-Boothe batter to get past first base.

At the Eastern District Tournament, Washington earned victories over Festus, 8-7 in 10 innings, and Shelbina, 6-0, to reach the finals. Post 218 took out Festus again in extra innings, 8-7, needing 11 frames to claim the title.

Catcher Jim Wunderlich, who split a finger in the opener against Festus, was awarded the most outstanding player award for the event by Legion Baseball Commissioner Ken Jones.

In the first game, Washington tied it in the ninth when Tom Dill scored on a hit by Ed Hambach. In the 10th Gerald Wehmueller doubled and Clifford Aitch singled to give Washington the win.

In the Shelbina game, Dyson shut down the opposition. Washington had six hits and eight walks in the game.

In the final game, Washington again faced Festus. Both Wehmueller and Dyson pitched. Again, the game went into extra innings.

Washington gained an edge when Jim Coons walked. He advanced to second on a grounder and raced home when Jim Voss looped a hit over the pitcher.

Playing in the state finals in Jefferson City, Post 218 ran into Springfield.

But not all of the action took place on the field. While in Jefferson City, the team saw the ugly head of Jim Crow as well.

Aitch, the team's only black player, was refused service at a restaurant. In a show of support, the rest of the Post 218 players got up and left.

"We were in Jefferson City and went into this place to eat. Cliff Aitch came in a second group of people and he was told they wouldn't serve him," said Herb Dill. "They had just brought us our food when we walked out. If they wouldn't serve him, we weren't going to eat there."

Washington won the first game, 4-2, but Springfield handed Post 218 its first defeat of the season in the second game, 4-3.

That set up a climactic third game for the state title and Washington prevailed, 7-4.

Springfield built up a 4-0 lead, but Washington rallied for seven runs in the bottom of the eighth to win the game, 7-4.

In the bottom of the eighth, Washington's hits included a triple by Bob Dieckhaus and doubles from Jim Voss, Jim Wunderlich and Bill Coons.

Protecting a three-run lead, Gerald Wehmueller shut down Springfield in the ninth to give Washington its first state title.

With the win, Post 218 earned its first Missouri Department championship pennant and earned the right to represent the Show-Me State in Hobart, Oklahoma, for the regional tournament.

Post 218 had big cleats to fill. Missouri's 1956 state champion, Stockham Post 245, had won the American Legion World Series title over New Orleans Post 345. It was Missouri's first national title.

Washington's biggest adventure that season was the trip to Hobart, Okla., The Post 218 players, Manager Henry Voss, Post 218's Ed Vedder, scorekeeper Jerry Luecke (who also represented The Missourian and The Citizen) and Batboy George Coons traveled by bus to Lambert Field.

The second part of the trip was a plane ride to Oklahoma City, Okla. From there, the team bussed to Hobart, which is near the Texas border.

"I think it was an Ozark DC-3," said Tom Dill. "They stopped in Springfield, Tulsa and Oklahoma City. When we got there, we had a two-hour ride to Hobart."

Washington was the only team to fly to the event, it was reported. Nobody got sick, but there were complaints of earaches.

The Bancroft, Iowa, team also had the option to fly or go by bus and stop in Kansas City to see the Athletics (now the Oakland A's) play an American League game.

There, Washington was drawn against the Kansas champion Topeka for the first round.

Luecke reported that the town of 5,000 had a field smooth enough to be compared to Busch Stadium (formerly Sportsman's Park).

Luecke reported Oklahoma City, which he considered the favorite of the tournament, featured three (Native American) Indians. One was J.D. Reynolds, son of former New York Yankee staff ace Allie Reynolds.

Dennis Boothe, a town druggist, was the city's representative to Post 218 during the event.

The story of the opener was Kansas pitcher Gerald Waldschmidt, who improved to 11-0 on the season as the Kansans won their 20th game against one loss.

Waldschmidt tossed a no-hitter, but gave Washington chances by walking 10 and hitting one. He struck out 14. His fielders made two errors as well.

Washington, which had the fewest wins of any team in the event, struggled at the plate and in the field with five errors. Wehmuller got the start and suffered his first loss of the season. Wehmuller allowed 10 hits, but The Citizen report stated that five of the hits never should have happened as the third out of an inning should have taken place before those hits.

The loss knocked Washington into the losers' bracket against Bancroft, Iowa, (25-2). Bancroft's opening loss to Oklahoma City, 1-0, broke a 25-game winning streak.

Bancroft started a new winning streak by beating Washington, 8-0, in the second game. The Bancroft team featured Denis Menke, who went on to sign with the Milwaukee Braves in 1958. He played in the Major Leagues from 1962-74.

Menke had pitched for Bancroft in the opening game with the only run being scored on a dropped ball in a hotbox.

During the introduction meeting, Bancroft's manager had stated his town was 1,000 people, at least 300 who are pitchers.

Washington actually outhit Bancroft in the game, 8-7, but couldn't put together timely hits against Bancroft's Don Fennema.

Tom Dill led Washington with three hits in four at-bats, including a ground-rule double which bounced over the fence at the 345-foot mark.

Jim Voss, Clifford Aitch, Jim Wunderlich and Ken Dyson had the other hits for Post 218.

Dyson was Washington's starting pitcher for the game and had trouble with the strike zone. Entering the game, Dyson had walked just eight batters all season. Bancroft drew 11 walks against Dyson and had one hit batter to go with six hits.

There were other stories on the road.

"We had some good times," said Herb Dill. "We were in the hotel and they had metal trash cans. We would take coat hangers and go around making a racket."

Bill Coons said the team played cards to pass the time.

"We had our batboy, George, playing poker with us," said Bill Coons.

Despite the team's final result, a gathering met the team when it returned from the Regional Tournament. The players were placed into convertibles for a parade through town. The parade ended at the parking lot of Franklin County Bank. Manager Henry Voss and players addressed the crowd, estimated at several hundred, and a dance was held following the remarks.

"It was neat when we came home and they had a parade," said Herb Dill.

While Post 218 remained competitive, it was 32 years before the program raised another championship banner.

Larry Maune had graduated from St. Francis Borgia in 1961 and served in the National Guard from 1964-70 while working at Sporlan in Washington.

"I've always had an interest in baseball," Maune said. "Before I started going to school, we had the Browns and Cardinals in St. Louis. I remember standing on a chair in the kitchen right in front of the refrigerator and listening to games on the radio. I got as close to the radio as I could."

Maune played Khoury League baseball in Washington starting in 1953. He played his first games at Ronsick Field stadium (Sportsmans Park).

Maune played two seasons for Post 218 and one year with St. Francis Borgia.

"We won our district both years I played on the Legion team. We went undefeated in the Ninth District in 1961. I struggled to make the starting lineup."

In 1962, Maune started playing for the Washington Buds, managed by Missouri Sports Hall of Famer Ray DeGreeff.

DeGreeff, the longtime boys basketball coach and athletic director at Borgia, told there were no openings, Maune made the most of his chance to play with the Buds and was part of the team for 23 years, eventually replacing DeGreeff as the teams manager starting in 1980. The team played its final season in 1984.

A Post 218 member, Maune started a 13-year run with the team in 1986.

"It was tremendously gratifying coaching Legion ball," Maune said. "We had a lot of success, especially in the earlier years. Our only goal was winning."

Under Maune's direction, Post 218 played in the zone tournament seven times and reached the state tournament three times. Post 218 won the state title in 1989 at Ronsick Field.

Post 218 defeated Conboy-Nichols Post 340, Maryland Heights Post 213 and C&H Post 462 in the state tourney to win the title.

"To win the state championship on our field in front of our own fans was quite a thrill," Maune said. "The first night, we were losing 3-0 in the eighth inning, but came back to tie the game on a double steal and later won in 12 innings. We beat a team from our own league in the championship game by a fair amount. It was a tight game for awhile, but everyone got a chance to play in the game."

Maune's assistants that year included Leroy Eggert and Dale Gildehaus. Eggert was quarterback on Washington High School's state football championship team in 1973. Gildehaus, Borgia's longtime football head coach, is a member of the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame as well as several other halls of fame.

The 1989 team featured a group from area schools, including Aaron Marquart, Chris Gildehaus, John Roderique, Tom Bruns, Rodney Racherbaumer, Derek Alferman, Mark Steinbeck, Kyle Scheer, Mark Speckhals, Eric Voelkerding, Kurt Speckhals, Jay Nowak, Rob Struckhoff, Kurt Skornia, Martin Eckhoff, Brent Eastwood and Derek Mauntel.

This Post 218 team went 34-11 overall and made the deepest foray into the American Legion postseason by a Washington Senior Legion team to date.

The team started by winning the Ninth District South Division title at 15-7, and was one of four division teams to reach the eight-team Ninth District Tournament. Also qualifying were Sullivan Post 18 Ditch Witch, Union Post 297 and Eureka Post 177.

C&H (Cottleville & Harvester) Post 462, the 1983 and 1984 Missouri champion, was the favorite, Maune said.

“It’s going to be fun,” Maune told the Missourian’s John Neier. “I think most managers agree that C&H is probably a step above the rest of us talent wise, but every team is relatively equal. It will boil down to strategy.”

As host of the state tournament, Washington already was guaranteed a spot in that event. But Post 218 looked to earn its way there.

C&H emerged from the winners’ bracket as the last unbeaten team, topping Washington, 11-6.

Washington came back in the losers’ bracket and beat C&H twice, 7-5 and 11-4. Washington trailed in the first game, 5-0, before a rain delay stopped action.

“We have a lot of boys on this team who love to play baseball, and they aren’t going to give up when they get behind,” Maune said.

Coming from the losers’ bracket to win a district title became something Maune’s teams were known for doing.

In the Zone 1 Tournament in Wentzville,

The district title inspired Post 218, which went unbeaten through the Zone 1 Tournament. Washington opened with a 7-3 win over Mexico and then knocked off Moberly Post 6, 5-3. In the winners’ bracket final, Post 218 ran into one of its all-time nemesis, Jefferson City Post 5. Washington won, 4-2.

The same two teams competed in the title series with Washington winning the first game, 10-5.

Steinbeck was named the Zone 1 Tournament MVP. He struck out 19 Mexico batters in the opener and came in to relieve in the first Jefferson City game, striking out six in three innings.

Steinbeck took an 11-1 record with two saves into the Missouri State Tournament, where Post 218 matched up with Conboy Nichols Post 340 of Independence in the opener.

Post 218 won the game, 4-3, but it went 11 innings.

In the second round, Post 218 defeated Maryland Heights Post 213 of the 10th District, 5-3.

In an all-Ninth District final, Post 218 defeated C&H Post 462, 8-2,

“No, it wasn’t a fireworks display that sent thunderous sounds rippling through Washington Saturday night. It was the roar of 1,300 wild and crazy fans cheering on their beloved baseball team at Ed Ronsick Field,” John Neier wrote in the Aug. 16, 1989 *Missourian*.

Derek Alferman was named the state tournament MVP after batting .462 with four stolen bases and two outfield assists which put out runners at the plate. In the final game, Alferman went 3-5 with two runs and one RBI.

Alferman went on to play for Three Rivers Community College, Arkansas State University and the Independent Anderson Lawmen.

Playing in the Central Regional in North Platte, Nebraska, Post 218 won three games.

Washington opened with a 4-3 win over Kansas champion Wyandotte Post 83.

Post 218 then edged Fargo, North Dakota, Post 2 by a 2-1 score. Fargo came back through the losers’ bracket to win the regional title.

Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Post 15 won a 3-2 game over Washington in the third round.

“To be honest with you, we were very, very lucky. I thought Washington outplayed us,” Sioux Falls Manager Dick Ronken told the *Missourian*.

It took 11 innings, but Washington survived a 5-2 game against Apple Valley, Minnesota, Post 1776 in the losers' bracket. Kurt Speckhals smashed a three-run home run in the 11th inning for the winning runs.

"I was just looking to make good contact, or at least advance the runners a base, and it just happened," Speckhals said.

Fargo Post 2 then eliminated Post 218 one game short of the championship series, 9-3.

Fargo won the title by beating Sioux Falls, 7-4.

Post 218 made another run to an unlikely Ninth District title in 1991. In the final year for the youngest of the 1989 state champions, fourth-seeded Post 218 was able to fight back from a second-round loss to Union Post 297 to make it through the losers' bracket. Home runs by Rob Struckhoff and Kurt Skornia helped Washington beat Union in the losers' bracket final. Post 218 then defeated Daniel Boone Post 262 twice over two days to win the tournament title.

Washington swept in the Zone 1 Tournament at Ronsick Field, beating Daniel Boone for the title. However, Washington lost to Jefferson City Post 5 and Festus Post 253 in the state tournament in Jefferson City.

The Missouri State Tournament returned to Ronsick Field in 1993. Those involved with the Post 218 program would tell you that the struggle wasn't in running the tournament, but in getting the facility ready for it.

The tournament took place just after the highest Missouri River levels during the Great Flood of 1993 and it was the wettest year on record to that time. A total of 3.53 inches of rain fell on what was supposed to be the tournament's opening day. Organizers were able to have the field ready to go with only one day's delay.

Post 218 played in the event as the host team after falling in the Ninth District Tournament.

Maune's squad won its opening game over Ash Grove Post 639, the defending state champion, 5-2. Todd Schmidt, who went on to play in the St. Louis Cardinals organization, pitched all nine innings. Ryan Bock logged three hits from the No. 8 spot in the order while Nathan Philipp had two hits.

Eventual champion Oak Grove Truck Stop (Post 379) defeated Post 218 in the second round, 6-3.

Washington then eliminated Ash Grove, 12-2, to reach the losers' bracket final. Ballwin Post 611 ended Washington's run, 5-1.

Oak Grove won the title over Ballwin, 10-6, with Oak Grove's Ryan Fry being named the event MVP.

Maune retired from managing Post 218 after the 1998 season, but still attends many games, including postseason contests, along with his wife, Sally.

Tim Malloy, Maune's longtime assistant, took over as the Post 218 Senior team's manager. Malloy managed the team into the 2000s.

Malloy's best season came in another lengthy run in 2000.

Trailing Central in the opening round, 8-0, Washington came back for a 15-13 win in the opening round. After a loss to C&H Post 462, Post 218 went into the losers' bracket with wins over Sullivan Post 18, Daniel Boone Post 262, Elsberry Post 226 and Wentzville Post 323. Washington lost to C&H in the tournament championship, but qualified for the Zone 1 Tournament at C&H Park.

Washington made news with a 10-6 win over Jefferson City Post 5 in the opening game, and led C&H in the second game, 11-5. The Ninth District champions came back to win the game, 13-12. Jefferson City, powered by three Phil Pitts home runs, knocked out Post 218 in the next round.

Since American Legion baseball changed its age limits, Post 218 had fielded a second team at the AA, or Junior level.

In 2002, Missouri American Legion baseball added a third level. Freshman (A) baseball was first contested that year and Post 218's team coached by Paul Kamphoefner won the inaugural Ninth District Tournament, beating Central in the title game at Ronsick Field, 11-6. Three teams, Washington Central and Wentzville Post 323, played in the district that year.

Post 218 hosted the state tournament at Dutzow Ballpark, reaching the championship game before losing to Ballwin Post 611.

That same year, Tom Schroeder's Junior Legion team won the Ninth District and Zone 1 titles and went 1-2 at the state tournament in Jefferson City.

The 2003 season saw the introduction of Kent Getsee as the Freshman team manager. Getsee led his team to another Ninth District regular season title, the district tournament crown and a berth in the state tournament at Heine Meine Ballpark in Lemay.

The early 2000s were building years for the program. Schroeder, who led the Post 218 Juniors to two district titles, took over as the Senior Legion manager in 2004. Getsee moved up to manage the Post 218 Juniors. Washington's Seniors and Freshmen won league titles that year.

Big changes were afoot for 2005. The Washington Rotary Club pledged \$100,000 to the project, which ended up costing \$479,494.

The old grandstands were demolished. A building which housed the concession stand, restrooms and announcer's booth was constructed along with new covered stands. The old foul ball alleys to the stands were covered and the light poles were moved out of play.

Former Major League Baseball pitcher Morris "Lefty" Martin threw out the first pitch in the opening ceremony April 9 before a high school game between the city's two teams.

The concession stand fell under the leadership of Don Schneider, who also had taken care of much of the work behind the scenes. Schneider helped to diversify the menu and make Rotary Recreational Complex - Ronsick Field one of the top destinations for teams around the St. Louis area.

The highlight of 2005 was the play of the Post 218 Juniors.

Getsee's team won the Missouri State Tournament title at Ronsick Field and then became the first Post 218 team to claim a regional championship, winning the Mid-States Regional in Crowley, Louisiana.

Post 218 first won the Ninth District title at City Centre Park in St. Peters before going to Jefferson City for the Zone 1 Tournament.

Post 5 won the zone title and both teams moved to the state tournament at the upgraded Rotary Recreational Complex - Ronsick Field.

Washington, which had overcome an 11-1 deficit in the regular season against Rock Memorial, opened with a 7-6 comeback win over the Ozark Merchants in the first round. Joe Huber, caught off base after a Zack Getsee hit, slid around the Ozark catcher to score the winning run. Post 218 trailed 6-1 going to the bottom of the seventh.

In the semifinals, Post 218 edged Jefferson City, 8-7. Washington again pulled out the win in the bottom of the seventh. Ethan Kleekamp led off with a double and Jesse Morris was intentionally walked. Two flyouts removed much of the pressure from Post 5, but Jake Motta delivered a single to center and Kleekamp scored the winning run.

A rematch with Jefferson City didn't happen after Manchester Post 208 knocked out Post 5 in one of the hottest games in Ronsick Field history. Several Jefferson City players had to be assisted due to heat illness.

Manchester then beat Washington in the first playoff game, bringing the two teams back for a Sunday afternoon contest to determine the state winner.

Washington led 4-3 going into seventh inning, but exploded for 12 runs with two outs to win, 16-4.

Kleekamp's three-run home run kicked off the scoring surge. Mark Locher went 5-5 and Teddy Watkins recorded four hits.

Motta was the winning pitcher.

"Ethan's missile to dead center field was the insurance we needed, but I would have never guessed it was the beginning of a 12-run, two-out rally," Kent Getsee said. "That was the best team hitting I have ever seen, anywhere, at any level. Coach (Moe) Locher said it when he walked into the dugout before the game, he looked right at me and said, 'The flags are blowing out, we are going to drive some balls today.' He was dead on!"

That sent Post 218 on one of the biggest adventures in program history, the Mid-States Regional in Crowley, Louisiana.

Regional tournaments at the Junior Legion level are considered invitationals, as there is no official national American Legion event at that level.

The event had to be rescheduled once the teams arrived and Post 218 opened against the host team Notre Dame Pios. Behind a complete game from Patrick Byrne, who struck out 10, and a pair of two-run innings, Post 218 prevailed, 5-3.

Bruce Backhaus tripled while Sam Kleberger added an RBI double. Morris walked twice.

Facing the Shreveport Athletics, Danny Taylor picked up the ball and tossed a one-hitter in a 10-0 victory. The game was scoreless into the bottom of the fourth before Post 218 busted it open with three runs. Washington added two in the fifth and finished it with six runs in the sixth.

Playing in the spacious Miller Stadium, Washington got doubles from Locher, Backhaus and Kleekamp. Eight of the nine Washington starters had at least one hit.

Playing in the championship game, Post 218 got Shreveport again. This time the game was tied through regulation, 3-3. Shreveport took the win with three runs in the top of the eighth, although Post 218 responded with two runs in the bottom of the inning.

That set up a winner-take-all game in the sticky Louisiana heat.

Getsee handed the ball back to Patrick Byrne and he went 4.1 innings while allowing one run on seven hits. Byrne was named the most outstanding player of the tournament.

Taylor pitched the final 2.2 innings.

Washington (32-5) made sure both pitchers had plenty of run support in the 9-2 victory. Washington scored three times in the first and twice in the second before Shreveport pushed its first run across the plate.

Locher led Washington's batters with three hits, including two doubles.

Getsee's assistants on the coaching staff were Moe Locher and Ted Watkins. Players were Danny Taylor, Patrick Byrne, John Bowen, Robert Dunning, Ethan

Kleekamp, Jesse Morris, Sam Kleberger, David Sumner, Teddy Watkins, Mark Locher, Adam Nacy, Joe Huber, Bruce Backhaus and Jake Motta.

Washington got out of Louisiana in good time. Just 22 days later, Hurricane Katrina hit the eastern part of the state. Crowley didn't get much of a reprieve, getting hit by Hurricane Rita in late September.

In 2006, the Post 218 Seniors traveled to Elkhorn, Nebraska, to play in the Worth College World Series Tournament. Post 218 players were able to play during the day and go to the College World Series (won by Oregon State over North Carolina) during the evenings.

Tom Schroeder's team opened with a 12-4 win over Roncalli, Nebraska, before dropping a 7-4 decision to the Chico Nuts.

Post 218 defeated Ralston Valley of Arvada, Colorado, 11-7, but lost to the Bartlesville, Oklahoma, Indians, 2-1. Adam Hibden of Bartlesville was able to outduel Washington's Ryan Schweissguth in the game. Both struck out seven. Joe Kelton's sixth-inning home run tied it at 1-1 and Bartlesville continued to rally for another run.

Post 218 completed the tournament with a 5-3 win over Elkhorn Post 211.

Post 218 reached the state tournament, but failed to advance. It was another six years before Post 218 raised its next pennants.

The Post 218 Seniors once again hosted the Senior Legion State Tournament in 2008, The Blue Springs Post 499 Rod's Sports A's defeated Columbia Post 202 Red Weir, 7-3, in the championship game.

The year 2012 was no Mayan apocalypse for Post 218. Instead, it ushered in the first twofer for the program.

The Freshman Legion team, which had come close before, captured the team's first state title, beating Ste. Genevieve Post 150 in Branson, 8-0.

Evan Ayers went the distance, shutting out Ste. Genevieve on four hits, three walks and one hit batter. He struck out four.

Kevin Juergens managed the team with Darrell Hasenjaeger and Jordan Bierbaum as assistants. Bierbaum had been Post 218's starting pitcher in the inaugural Freshman Legion state championship game.

Players were Nick Thiel, Micah McNeal, Spencer Juergens, Shawn Mittler, John Himmelberg, Matt Miller, Todd Feldmann, Logan Holdmeyer, Nate Hillermann, Evan Ayers, Max Diener, Ryan Becszlko, Seth Bollmann, Eric Hasenjaeger, Justin Baylard, Austin Finder, Gus Kleekamp and Kody Halmich.

Post 218 ended at 39-2 for the season.

The Post 218 Seniors also won the state title, the third in team history. Mike Gardner's team opened with a 6-1 win over Hillcrest in the opener. Tony Helfrich tossed eight shutout innings for the win, allowing three hits and one walk while striking out eight.

Washington then beat Creve Coeur Post 397 in the second game, 11-6, to reach the championship game. Trent Leimkuehler, one of the longest-serving players in program history, had three hits with two triples and a home run. He also threw 3.1 innings of relief work to earn a save as Brendan Kleekamp got the win.

Creve Coeur came back to play Washington in the championship series at Sedalia's Liberty Park Stadium. The 10th District team won the opener, 8-1, forcing a winner-take-all game.

Washington won that contest, 9-1, on the power of a Brendan Feldmann complete game win. Mike McGilvray had the big hit, a three-run home run.

The win sent Post 218 to New Orleans for the Mid-South Regional.

Weather was a factor with heavy rain rendering Kirsch-Rooney Stadium unplayable and games were moved to Jesuit High School's John Ryan Stadium.

There, Post 218 took on host Crescent City Post 125 Retif Oil in a game which started at 10:43 p.m. and didn't end until 12:54 a.m. the next day.

The host team prevailed, 6-1, on the power of an Emerson Gibbs pitching effort. He retired 18 batters in a row at one point. Retif Oil won the World Series title that year with Gibbs being named the American Legion Player of the Year.

Washington, which ended at 39-10 ran into Columbia, Tennessee, Post 19 pitcher Garrett Ring. Columbia prevailed, 3-0, as Post 218 exited the tournament.

Players were Sam Deschenes, Dustin Howard, Trent Leimkuehler, Zach Pointer, Matt Jones, Mike McGilvray, Grant Eckelkamp, Tony Helfrich, Andrew Sumner, Noah Borgerding, Dilan Bollmann, Brendan Kleekamp, Brendan Feldmann, David McNeal, Jack Kopmann and Luke Hasenjaeger.

Gardner was assisted by Jeff Leimkuehler, Ben Cassat and Aaron Miller.

The year 2013 yielded two district championship teams at the Junior and Freshman levels. The Post 218 Seniors won the Ninth District regular-season pennant.

Washington's Freshman team struck again in 2014, claiming the Missouri State title with a 3-0 win over Ste. Genevieve Post 150 at Ronsick Field.

It was an unexpected title for Post 218, which went 31-11 under Scott Forrester.

"So if you boil all this down it's a pretty simple formula," Forrester told the *Missourian*. "Post 218 + dedicated coaches + dedicated players + dedicated parents = 2014 American Legion A State Championship."

Post 218 stood at 5-6 after a 6-1 June 1 loss to St. Charles Post 312. Playing the next night in St. Peters, Forrester reported that game was the season's turning point.

"The real turning point seemed to be our first game against St. Peters," Forrester said. "It was a back-and-forth game at the Rec-Plex in St. Peters. We finally took the lead for good by the squeeze play and then two more bunts for runs and we went up 9-6. St. Peters came up and put the first two runners on and then the lights went out and we had a 45-minute delay. I had to bring in Zach Stahlman because of the delay. Zach came in and shut down St. Peters and we won that game. At that point we were 5-6 and the win put us at 6-6. We never dropped below .500 again and we went on a 19-2 run."

Post 218 won its next five games and went undefeated the rest of the way in the Ninth District.

In the Ninth District Tournament at Elsberry, Post 218 handed St. Charles its first loss of the season, 6-0, with Eli Marquart tossing a two-hit shutout.

St. Charles came back to win the district tournament over Post 218, but Washington gained confidence heading to the state tournament at home.

Post 218 opened with a 9-4 win over Eureka Post 177, and posted one of the program's biggest comebacks against Jackson Post 158. Trailing 9-1 in the fifth and trailing 10-7 after six, Post 218 scored five times in the top of the seventh to beat Jackson, 12-10.

Marquart and Zach Stahlman pitched for Post 218 with Stahlman earning the victory.

Jacob Unnerstall posted three hits with two RBIs and Drew Piontek added two hits, two runs, a walk and three RBIs. Marquart drove in four.

Post 218 then forced a second championship game by beating Ste. Genevieve, 5-2.

Players on that team were Jeff Peters, Michael McElwain, Drew Piontek, Teddy Meyer, Tommy Ruether, Quinton Poepsel, Zach Stahlman, Nathan Brekenkamp, Eli Marquart, Logan Gratza, Matt Pionek, Jack Piontek, Zach Finley, Ryan McDermott, Jacob Unnerstall, Zach Machelett and Tyler Patton.

Coaches were Jordan Bierbaum, Jack Kopmann, Joe Kopmann and Phil Mallinckrodt.

The Post 218 Juniors placed third that season at the state tournament in Jackson.

Many of the same players moved up to to Kent Getsee's 2015 Junior Legion team, which won the Missouri State Tournament and placed second in the Mid-States Regional in Fargo, North Dakota, at 40-6.

In the Missouri State Tournament in Blue Springs, the "Comeback Kids" had to play each of the other four teams, starting with the extra round.

Post 218 was able to vanquish Blue Springs Post 499/Fike, Sedalia Post 642, Glendale and Festus Post 253.

Washington trailed by four, five and six runs in different games and had to come out of the losers' bracket to beat Festus twice.

"It's unlike anything I've ever felt before," Post 218 player Adam Gauzy, who was one of the returners from last year's third-place state finisher, said. "This is my first year as a champion, unlike most of the other guys on the team who have won two years now. It's a great experience and something I'll never forget."

Festus defeated Post 218 in the winners' bracket final, 4-2, with a two-run home run in the bottom of the sixth by Braden Cox being the difference.

After winning in the loser' bracket, Post 218 defeated Festus twice, including a 4-3 victory in the winner-take-all game.

Sam Fuchs, who finished the first championship series game, started with Eli Marquart and Gus Kleekamp also throwing.

Drew Piontek led the offense with two hits, including a double.

Then, it was off to Fargo.

After a 6-5 opening loss to the Rapid City, South Dakota, Post 22 Expos in eight innings, Washington fought through the tournament.

Post 218 defeated the Rapid City, South Dakota, Post 22 Bombers, 4-0, to reach the title game.

Tournament highlights included a no-hitter by Zach Finley against Arkansas City, Kansas, and a two-hit shutout by Gus Kleekamp against the Bombers in a Saturday night game.

In the final game, the Bombers edged Washington, 4-3. It was the sixth game in four games for Post 218 and second game of the day.

Playing in 2015 for Post 218 were Eli Marquart, Adam Gauzy, Ryan Lohrer, Matt Piontek, Tommy Ruether, Nathan Breckenkamp, Zach Stahlman, Zach Finley, Quinton Poepsel, Gus Kleekamp, Adam Kleekamp, Teddy Meyer, Jacob Unnerstall, Drew Piontek, Sam Fuchs and Jace Backs.

Getsee was assisted by Phillip Kleekamp, Rick Aholt, Eric Voelkerding and Todd Kleekamp.

North Dakota was the theme for the 2015 Post 218 season as the Senior Legion team also traveled there in the postseason.

Blue Springs Post 499/Fike defeated Post 218 in the state championship game in Sedalia, but Washington was contacted by the American Legion to fill in for Iowa's state champion at the Central Plains Regional in Bismarck, North Dakota.

Eden Prairie, Minnesota, defeated Post 218 in the opening game,

Washington beat the host Bismarck Governors in the second game, 11-4. Aaron Meyer tossed a complete game, allowing four runs (two earned) on 10 hits, two walks and a hit batter. He struck out five.

Post 218 had 16 hits in the game with Seth Bollman and Spencer Juergens both contributing three.

Post 218 got knocked out in a back-and-forth game against Nebraska's Creighton Prep Five Points Bank, 13-10.

Post 218 ended the season at 36-7.

"It is always a great experience to go and play in a regional tournament," Gardner said. "It is something that the kids get to share with their teammates and will have that bond and memory forever. It really helps our program as kids coming up get to hear about how much fun we had and have one more reason to win a state championship. We are a fairly young team and hopefully everyone comes back and is hungry to get to another regional."

The year 2016 yielded a regional winner, two state champions and a state runner-up for Post 218.

Getsee's Post 218 Juniors went 34-5 and won the Central Plains Regional Tournament in Rapid City, South Dakota.

Post 218 recovered from a first-round state tournament loss to Cape Girardeau to beat Elsberry and Cape Girardeau to reach the championship series. Two wins over Sedalia Post 642, including a 4-3 triumph in the final game, gave Washington the state title.

Pitching on his birthday, Zach Stahlman went the distance to earn the pitching win. He allowed three runs (two earned) on seven hits and a walk while striking out two.

Post 218 opened regional play with an 11-1 win over Watertown, South Dakota, Post 17, 11-1. Next was a 3-2 win over the Hopkins, Minnesota, Post 320 Millers. Chris Broeder scored the winning run in the bottom of the seventh.

In South Dakota, Post 218 got another shot at Fargo Post 2 and won in the winners' bracket final, 7-4.

By a 4-1 final, Post 218 defeated the Rapid City Post 22 Expos for the regional title.

As had been the case in big games, Eli Marquart was on the mound for Post 218 and he went the distance. The expos managed three hits, one walk and one hit batter for one unearned run. Marquart struck out two.

“On a beautiful day in Rapid City, our guys played one of our best games of the year and it was jump-started by Eli Marquart,” Getsee said. “Words cannot begin to tell you how tough of a task he had in front of him and he handled it with as much grit and determination as any player could have. He made pitches when he needed to, he fielded his position and made a couple of great plays and kept the hosts at bay most of the day.”

Logan Gratza posted two hits for Washington and drove in a pair of runs. Tommy Ruether doubled and walked twice, scoring three times.

Teddy Meyer and Caleb Cook also singled.

Players on the regional championship team were Spencer Hunter, Ben Maune, Justin Heggemann, Teddy Meyer, Tommy Ruether, Zach Stahlman, Logan Gratza, Michael McElwain, Hunter Mehler, Caleb Cook, Josh Hendrickson, Eli Marquart, Quinton Poepsel, Kaden Bollmann, Brandon Repp, Chris Broeder, Jake Jinkerson and Ryan Sauvage.

Getsee's coaching staff included Phillip Kleekamp, Rick Aholt, Eric Voelkderding and Todd Kleekamp.

Not to be outdone, the Post 218 Freshmen also won the state title, going 30-2.

Washington went unbeaten through the state tournament in Hannibal, beating Jackson Post 158 in the final game, 8-0.

Joe Hackmann went the distance on the hill, scattering four hits and one hit batter. He struck out two.

Bryce DeCoster had three hits while Spencer Hunter and Leighten Schroeter both had two hits. Hunter homered.

Players were Tyler Glosemeyer, Joe Hackmann, Max Bowen, Garrick Ogle, Ethan Hillermann, Bryce Mayer, Bryce DeCoster, Matthew Howell, Rett Corley, Matthew Sinnott, Ryan Glatz, Cole Boland, Evan Holdmeyer, Nicholas Helfrich, Adam Molitor, Leighten Schroeter and Spencer Hunter.

Joe Kopmann was the team's manager. He was assisted by Jack Kopmann, Mike Hunter, Chris Molitor and Phil Mallinckrodt.

The Post 218 Seniors came close to making it a treble, but lost to Sedalia Post 642 in the state championship series, 5-2.

Post 218 finished the season at 31-7, and had to survive a 10-inning win over Ste. Genevieve Post 150, 3-2, just to reach the championship series. Washington scored twice in the ninth inning to tie the game and force extra play.

Spencer Juergens, who scored the winning run, also was the winning pitcher while going four innings while allowing a hit and a walk with two strikeouts. Nate Hillermann started on the hill for Washington and went six innings while allowing two runs (one earned) on four hits, five walks and two hit batters. He struck out four.

Hillermann and Justin Baylard scored Washington's runs in the ninth with Kyle Tuepker and Austin Finder getting the RBIs.

In 2017, the Post 218 Freshmen repeated as state champions, going 26-3-2.

In the final game, Post 218 knocked off Festus Post 253 at Clemens Field in Hannibal, 12-10. Post 218 had to come back from a 6-2 deficit.

Joe Hackmann led the way with five hits and drove in two runs in the eighth inning to lift Post 218 to the title. Hackmann had three RBIs in the game and scored twice.

Cody Linders and Levi Weber both had three hits. Brandon Stahlman drove in two with a single and Wil Heggemann tripled.

With the main pitchers out of innings, younger players threw and Louis Paule, Brayden Mayer, Levi Weber and Luke Hendrickson shared time on the mound.

Playing on that team were Josh Garbs, Joe Hackmann, Bryce Mayer, Nick Hellmann, Louis Paule, Evan Comely, Jared Schrader, Drew Holtmeyer, Brandon Stahlman, Luke Hendrickson, Eli Humphreys, Wil Heggemann, Levi Weber, John Volmert, Brayden Mayer, Jack Czeschin and Cody Linders.

Joe Kopmann managed the team and was assisted by Jack Kopmann, Justin Schuler and Bryan Seitter.

State championships eluded Post 218 teams for the rest of the decade, although Washington always had a presence.

The Post 218 Seniors finished third in 2018 and 2019. The Juniors were third in 2018 and second in 2019. The Freshman team ended second in 2018.

American Legion baseball, and much of the sports world, was hit hard in 2020 with the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, which halted Legion baseball.

Getsee, working with guidelines from Legion baseball and local authorities, made Ronsick Field a sports oasis during the summer of 2020. Teams from throughout the St. Louis region came out to games in what became called “The COVID League,” although there were no standings or playoffs.

When American Legion baseball officially returned in 2021, Post 218 was ready.

Both the Freshmen and Juniors won their respective Ninth District Tournament titles and ended up finishing second in the state tournament.

However, it was the Post 218 Senior Legion team which made the most unlikely run of all.

After losing in the Ninth District Tournament to Rhineland Post 147 short of the championship series, the team entered the Zone 1 Tournament as the host team.

The NEMO Post 6 Sixers scored all of their runs in the top of the second on the way to a 6-5 win in the opener. Washington was one loss away from folding up the uniforms for the season.

Multiple incidents in the other first-round game at St. Francis Borgia High School led to one of the most bizarre happenings in postseason play.

In a game between Hannibal Post 55 (Culp) and Jefferson City Post 5, the Ninth District champion, built up a 10-0 lead on Post 5. Jefferson City ended Hannibal's bid for a run-rule win with three runs in the bottom of the fifth.

During the rally, a Jefferson City baserunner and Hannibal infielder had a disagreement and came to blows. Both were ejected.

Since Hannibal only had 10 players and already had changed pitchers, the ejection left Post 55 with too few to continue and Jefferson City won by forfeit.

After the next round of games, an 11-1 win by Washington over Hannibal and a Jefferson City win over the Sixers, the Jefferson City-Hannibal game claimed its final victim.

In reporting that game, it was discovered that Post 5 had used an ineligible player as a runner and State Commissioner Gary Stone ruled Jefferson City was ejected from the tournament.

That left Post 218 and NEMO as the only remaining teams and both had one loss at that time.

Post 218 continued its season with a 3-0 win in the winner-take-all game. Blake Whitlock went 6.1 innings, allowing six hits and three walks while striking out four. Ethan Mort needed five pitches to secure the save with two outs, including a strikeout.

Zac Coulter had two of the four Post 218 hits in the game. Sam Paule doubled and Dane Eckhoff singled.

At 19-12, Post 218 headed to Sedalia and the state tournament. That's where everything started to really click.

Post 218 opened state play with a 22-3 win over Gladstone Herrick Memorial Post 626.

In the winners' bracket final, Post 218 defeated Oak Grove Post 379, 8-5.

Washington met Oak Grove again in the championship game and won, 10-4, giving the program its fourth Senior Legion state title.

Sam Turilli pitched 5.1 innings for the win, allowing four runs on six hits and two walks.

Logan Dieckman tossed the final 1.2 innings, allowing a hit and striking out one.

Turilli and Dane Eckhoff both had two hits. Eckhoff doubled twice while Gavin Matchell singled and doubled.

With that, Post 218 found itself headed to Nebraska for the Mid-South Regional.

Facing the host team at Duncan Stadium, Post 218 lost to the Hastings Post 11 Five-Points Bank Chiefs by a 3-0 score. Brayden Mackey and Markus Miller combined for a four-hit shutout. Louis Paule had two of the Washington hits.

Facing Gene Taylor's Baseball Club, the Colorado state champions, Post 218 struggled to find its bats for the first five innings. Trailing by a 4-1 margin, Washington caught fire for four runs in the bottom of the sixth and held on in the seventh to win, 5-4.

Whitlock started on the hill and went five innings, allowing four runs on five hits, three walks and a hit batter. He struck out one.

Calvin Straatmann threw the final two frames for the win, allowing a hit and a walk.

Whitlock had two of the five Washington hits and drove in two. Zac Coulter walked twice and scored two runs. Sam Paule, Louis Paule and Cody Vondera all singled.

The win allowed Post 218 to stay another day in Nebraska and get a rematch with Oak Grove Post 379, which had received a bonus bid to the tournament.

Only one Missouri team was going to continue and it was Washington, 6-2. Sam Paule got the ball to start and went 4.2 innings for the win. He allowed two runs on four hits, two walks and a hit batter while striking out three.

Morgan Copeland pitched two hitless innings, striking out two.

Logan Dieckman got the final out after allowing two hits.

Sam Turilli had three hits, a stolen base and two runs from the leadoff spot. Zac Coulter, who played both shortstop and left field, logged two hits, a run and two RBIs. Sam Paule walked twice.

Post 218 scored three runs in the first and one in the second before both teams scored twice in the fifth.

Playing Dyersville Post 137 Dubuque County, Iowa, in the next round, both teams were defeated by one of Nebraska's infamous thunderstorms, which dropped hail before officials determined the game had to be postponed. Finishing up on the final day, the Iowa champions scored twice in the bottom of the first and seven times in the second on the way to an 11-4 win.

Dane Eckhoff, Gavin Matchell and Blake Whitlock all had two hits in the game. Whitlock, Sam Paule and Sam Turilli doubled.

Logan Dieckman and Ethan Etter combined for 2.1 innings of hitless relief work.

Post 218 capped the season at 24-14. Players were Sam Turilli, Gavin Matchell, Blake Whitlock, Ethan Etter, Jacob Baldwin, Cody Vondera, Jarett Hamlett, Zac Coulter, Calvin Straatmann, Louis Paule, Morgan Copeland, Sam Paule, Logan Dieckman, Dane Eckhoff and Ethan Mort.

Getsee was assisted by Phillip Kleekamp, Martin Eckhoff, Rick Aholt and Mic Fox.

Prior to the 2022 season, the City of Washington funded improvements for Rotary Recreational Complex - Ronsick Field with turf being installed on the infield.

More hardware was on the way in 2022.

While both the Seniors and Freshmen made their respective state tournaments, the focus was on the Post 218 Junior Legion team.

Washington went 30-6 and won the state championship at Ronsick Field, beating their biggest rival, Elsberry Post 226 Red, for the state title, 6-0.

Washington and Elsberry played each other 10 times that season. Washington won six of the games and beat Post 226 Red in the Zone 1 and State Tournament championship games. Elsberry won the Ninth District Tournament title.

In the state championship game, Grant Trentmann went the distance on 99 pitches in the title game, scattering four hits and four walks while striking out seven. He also had three of the 10 Washington hits.

Kabren Koelling had two hits, Drew Eckhoff tripled and Reagan Kandlbinder doubled.

Trentmann was Washington's ace, going 9-1 on the season. Kaden Patke, Jack Dunard and Reagan Kandlbinder won four games apiece. Justin Mort was a three-game winner on the mound.

Reagan Kandlbinder and Noah Hendrickson hit the team's home runs.

Playing for Post 218 were Noah Hendrickson, Will Hoer, Tyler Kromer, Cohen Jasper, Drew Eckhoff, Reagan Kandlbinder, Noah Wilson, Kaden Patke, Grant Trentmann, Lane Roettering, Jack Dunard, Justin Mort, Sam Strubberg, Ethen Holland, Ryan Williams and Kabren Koelling.

Todd Kleekamp managed the team and his coaches were Quinton Poepsel, Danny Taylor and Eric Voelkerding.

Post 218 continued to ride the momentum in 2023, pulling off a state championship double, a second-place finish and a fifth-place state tie.

For the first time, Post 218 fielded four teams with two Freshman-level squads, the Red and the Navy teams.

The Post 218 Red team, led by Joe Kopmann, rolled to a 25-4 record and the state championship by beating the Jackson Post 158 Tribe in the title game in Jackson, 6-4.

Ben Gelinas pitched a complete game for Post 218, allowing four unearned runs on four hits and three walks while striking out eight.

Gelinas and Josh Koirtyohann both had two hits.

After winning the Ninth District regular season and tournament titles, Washington opened with an 8-5 win over Cape Girardeau Ford & Sons to start the event.

Post 218 then beat Blue Springs Post 499/Fike, 13-3, and Jackson, 12-2, to reach the championship game.

Playing for Post 218 were Ben Gelinas, Andrew Elbert, Colton Warnecke, Lane Mallinckrodt, Jacob Schroeder, Ben Nieder, Josh Koirtyohann, Nakai Scott, Will Weber, Joe Downey, Max Borgerding, Henry Zeitzmann, AJ Buehrlen and Ray Downey.

Joe Kopmann was assisted by Jack Kopmann, Bryan Seitter, Phil Mallinckrodt and Jay Schroeder.

The second Post 218 team, Navy, went 15-21 overall, but caught fire in the playoffs. The younger of the two Post 218 Freshman teams was managed by Kerry Mallinckrodt. Seeded fourth in the Ninth District Tournament, it lost to Hannibal Post 55 in the opening round, 7-3.

Playing to survive, Post 218 made a run through the losers' bracket, knocking out Union Post 297 (7-0) and Elsberry Post 226 (2-1) to reach the title game. Washington Post 218 Red won that game, 12-3, but both advanced to the state tournament.

At the state event, Post 218 wedged a win over Sedalia Post 642 between losses to Jackson (4-1) and Fike (10-0) to tie for fifth in the eight-team event.

Eric Voelkerding's Post 218 Juniors went 24-10 on the season, finishing second in the state tournament in Blue Springs. Ste. Genevieve Post 150 beat Post 218 for the title, 5-2.

The standout of the 2023 season was the Post 218 Seniors. Washington went 38-3 and did not lose to another Missouri team during the season.

Kent Getsee's team dominated during the regular season and did not lose a game until June 30, falling to the Aviston, Illinois, Post 1239 Express, 3-2.

Washington won titles at the Ballwin BATtles Cancer Tournament, John E. Hayes Best of the Midwest Invitational in Terre Haute, Indiana, and the Post 218 Firecracker Tournament.

Post 218 followed by winning the Ninth District title, the Zone 1 Tournament title and advancing to the expanded Missouri State Tournament in Sedalia.

With six teams in the event, Washington was one of the teams forced to play twice on the opening day and got wins over Jackson Post 158 (12-2) and Sedalia Post 642 (1-0) to move to the winners' bracket final.

In the Sedalia game, Will Mentz scattered five hits, two walks and two hit batters for the shutout. He struck out three.

Washington made a fourth-inning run stick and managed three hits and one walk for the game.

In the winners' bracket final, Post 218 beat Festus Post 253, 8-4. Reagan Kandlbinder pitched five innings for the win, allowing four runs (three earned) on seven hits and two hit batters. he struck out three.

Drew Eckhoff got the save, pitching two innings and allowing one hit.

Kandlbinder and Kannon Hibbs had three hits apiece. Both doubled along with Sam Paule. Paule had two hits.

Kandlbinder drove in three runs and Paule had two RBIs.

In the championship game, Getsee handed the ball to Kaden Patke, a double-rostered player who had been on the Junior Legion team all season. Patke went 4.1 innings, allowing one run on two hits and two walks while striking out two to earn the win, 14-2.

Ryan Weidle pitched the last 1.2 innings, allowing a run on two hits and one walk while striking out one.

Offensively, Post 218 batters lashed out 18 hits for 14 runs and capped the game with a five-run inning in the top of the sixth.

Gavin Matchell and Will Mentz both had three hits. Mentz, Kannon Hibbs, Reagan Kandlbinder, and Tanner McPherson doubled.

Matchell crossed the plate three times. Sam Paule, Mentz and Kabren Koelling all scored twice.

McPherson and Aden Pecka drove in three runs apiece. Matchell and Koelling both had two RBIs.

With the win, Post 218 advanced to the Mid-South Regional in Pelham, Alabama. Arkansas state champion Paragould Post 17 Glenn Sain GMC Ricemen shut out Washington in the opener, 3-0. Sam Paule had two of Washington's four hits.

Taking on host Shelby County Post 555, Washington got a three-hit shutout from Reagan Kandlbinder to push on, 6-0.

Kandlbinder walked two and struck out six.

Offensively, Post 218 had 10 hits with Kannon Hibbs leading the way with three. Sam Paule and Tanner McPherson both logged two. Paule and Will Mentz both doubled. Paule also stole a base.

Pecka crossed the plate twice Kandlbinder had two RBIs.

Post 218 then knocked out the Panola, Mississippi, Post 118 Pirates, 1-0.

Anthony Broeker followed Reagan Kandlbinder's performance with a one-hit shutout. He walked two and struck out three.

Washington's run came in the top of the third, when Sam Paule was scored by Kannon Hibbs.

Washington was held to five singles, three walks and one hit batter.

Another meeting with Paragould, Arkansas, ended with Post 218 exiting the tournament, 5-3.

The Arkansas champions scored all five of their runs in the top of the first and were held scoreless by Ryan Weidle for the next six innings. He scattered three hits and two walks while giving Washington the chance to scrape back.

Post 218 scored a run in the third and two more in the fourth, but that was it.

The offensive highlight was Sam Paule's two-run home run to left field in the fourth.

The other two Washington hits were by Kannon Hibbs and Tanner McPherson. Will Mentz and Aden Pecka both walked twice. Post 218 drew nine free passes. Hibbs scored the other run while Kabren Koelling notched the RBI.

Post 218 went to Pelham, Alabama, already knowing it would be the next two-year host for the Mid-South Regional Tournament. Washington won that right through a bid process in the winter and spring of 2023 and Post 218 leadership had the chance to see a regional in action and ask questions.

The regional is the biggest tournament to be played at Ronsick Field in over a century of baseball action. The field has been the site of Morrie "Lefty" Martin's

benefit games which included major leaguers, being the home of the Washington Buds, and hosting numerous exhibition and barnstorming contests. Those include visits by the St. Louis Perfectos in 1899 and the Kansas City Monarchs.

Current Post 218 Senior Legion Manager Kent Getsee has led teams to three Junior and two Senior state titles. Two of Getsee's teams, the 2005 Juniors and 2016 Juniors, also won regional titles. The 2015 Juniors were second at the regional level.

Joe Kopmann has managed three Freshman level state championship teams. Henry Voss, Larry Maune, Kevin Juergens, Mike Gardner, Scott Forrester and Todd Kleekamp have managed one state championship team apiece.

In recent years, Post 218 has drawn players from many high school programs, including Washington, St. Francis Borgia, Union, St. Clair, Pacific, New Haven, Sullivan, Hermann, Owensville, Warrenton, Wright City and Crosspoint Christian School.

Courtesy of Bill Battle, Missourian