

THE SPECTATOR

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You're born with two strikes against you, so don't take a third one on your own."

THE BASEBALL LINE-UP HOW IMPORTANT IS IT AND WHO SHOULD LEAD OFF ?

For years, it was thought the best lead off man should be the fastest player with a good OBP (On Base Percentage). The second hitter should be able to move him up a base by bunt or hitting behind the runner. The third batter was usually the best all around hitter. The clean-up man was to be the best power guy. The hitter in the five spot hopefully had some power and ability to knock runs in. The 6 to 9 spots were filled with who was left, best of those hitting sixth and weakest hitting ninth. Many teams still follow the logic behind creating a line up that way.

When googling "How to make a baseball lineup", what popped up led to a discussion about information from [The Book - Playing the Percentages in Baseball](#). *The Book Says: Your three best hitters should bat somewhere in the #1, #2 and #4 slots. Your fourth- and fifth-best hitters should occupy the #3 and #5 slots. The #1 and #2 slot will have players with more walks than those in the #4 and #5 slots. From slot #6 through #9, put the players in descending order of quality.*

The argument being that the #1 and #2 hitters get the most at bats so they should be two of the best three hitters on the team and the #4 hitter leads off the second inning if the team goes out in order in the first. The #3 spot's decrease in importance is apparently based on research that says the three guy comes up the most with two outs and no one on and thus renders too many of his hits meaningless.

These formula line-ups don't take into account how good the hitter is at the hit-and-run or how good he is at going from first to third on a single, but many times the team that scores first can control the game and the first man up in the first inning can get his team off to that all important fast start.

Plenty of food for thought and in this issue we'll look at how teams around the *North Star League* use their lead off hitter and who they use as a lead off hitter.

Lead-off Hitters with a batting average over .300 (10 AB or more as lead-off man) are:

B Aho (Kingston) .500	T Carlson (StM) .342
M Bergstrom (DC) .429	K Holker (Monti) .323
Br Scanlon (Lor) .423	KC Johnson (MP) .320
D Decker (ML) .417	Ja Juntanen (Alb) .304
A Gagnon (HL) .379	T Decker (ML) .300
K Jaunich (Del) .379	

FOUR players have lead off every game for their team in 2006

Veterans Brandon Scanlon for Loretto and Andy Gagnon for Howard Lake along with relative newcomers Kevin Holker of Monticello and Tyler Carlson of St. Michael.



Tyler Carlson is a stereotypical lead-off man. A slap hitter who beats out bunts and infield hits. He sets the table for the Saints power hitters. Tyler is hitting .342 from the lead-off spot and leads all lead-off hitters in runs scored.



Catchers are not usually lead-off hitters, so using Matt Bergstrom at the top of the line-up fits into the category of using a top hitter to start the game. Matt is hitting .429 leading off and shows patience at the plate with good bat control and an excellent ability to hit-and-run in D-C's aggressive style attack.



The A's lead the league in runs scored by their lead-off men. They have employed Kevin Jaunich and his .379 batting average as their main lead-off guy. Kevin has proven to be both one of the better hitters for average with a knack for getting on base in front of the A's middle of the order hitters.



Darin and Tyler Decker have shared duty as the Laker's lead-off hitters, Both are hitting .300 from the number one hole, but the Lakers are near the bottom of the league in runs scored by lead-off hitters. Improving run production from that spot will probably be necessary if the Lakers are going to move up the standings.



The Huskies are the only team in the Central who's lead-off spot is hitting under .300. (They're at .270) Chris Runke and Jordan Schwarze have shared the spot in 2006 consistently getting one or two hits per game, but have not had a lead-off batter score more than one run in any league game this year.



Ben Geelan has a couple of good hitting and run producing games from the one hole in the line-up. Outside of those two games, Buffalo's has not produced much from that spot.



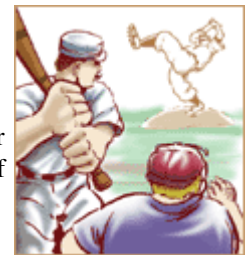
The Orphans take the unconventional approach of using their catcher, Andy Gagnon, as the first man to bat each game. Through the first half of the schedule, Andy is hitting .379 and with his brother Luke hitting second they have proven to be a tough combo to get out at the top of the Orphans's order.



The Polecats have inserted Kevin Holker into the lead off spot for them and he has responded by leading their team in hitting with a .323 batting average for 2006.



The Kings switched to Billy Aho a few games ago to jump start their offense and he has rewarded them with three 2 for 4 games and the top average of .500 among lead off hitters league wide.



The difference between politics and baseball is that in baseball when you get caught stealing, you're out. .



The Diamond Devils take the traditional approach and try to use their first two spots in the line-up to set the table so their 3-4-5 hitters can drive them in. Last year, the Diamond Devils used Matt Goodwald as their lead-off man, but when he was unavailable for the first few league games, they moved KC Johnson up from his normal slot as the two-hitter. He hit .320 in his 6 games as lead-off man and Matt has now returned to the lead-off spot with KC returned to his more familiar two hole. The key to how well Maple Plain does offensively often rides on the shoulders of these first two hitters as the middle of the line-up usually can drive runners home if they come to the plate with men on base.



Loretto has the most consistent hitter leading off for them. Brandon Scanlon led the division in hitting in 2005 and has started off 2006 by connecting at a .423 pace. The Larks employ the approach that batting Brandon first gets their best average hitter to the plate more times than anybody else and keeps the pressure on the opposition.



The Mallards have struggled the most, getting the weakest production from their number one hitters. They don't seem to have settled on any one player but they do need to find someone who can get on in front of Sycks and Snyder if they want to score enough to win.



The Villains lineup card usually starts with Jason Juntanen or Shane McLaughlin. They have been knocking out a hit per game at that spot which is about what every part of their line-up has been doing. The Villains need to bunch their hits a little more and get a few more multiple hit games from the top of the order to produce more runs.

The River Bandits initiate their attack with Mike Daugs as their main lead-off hitter. Cole Hanson has been the main number 2 guy, moving up to lead-off when Daugs isn't there. Those two are hitting just under .300, but they have been two of the hottest hitters for Rockford and no one behind them in the order is knocking them in with any consistency.

NEW VENUE FOR STATE TOURNAMENT

Miesville & Red Wing approved to Co-host 2006 Tourney



The State board of the Minnesota Baseball Association had to pull the State Tournament out of Rochester because some site arrangements at Rochester's main ballpark were not ready.

Forced to open last minute bidding, the board decided to award Miesville and Red Wing the right to co-host the 2006 event. Dassel and Maple Lake put a bid in to co-host, but since they both had hosted a tournament recently, their bid had only a small chance of succeeding.

Many of you may remember that Miesville and their field—Jack Ruhr field, were featured in article by the Star Tribune on June 2nd. The following is an excerpt from that article:

A diamond in the rough

Carved out of the corner of a cornfield, Miesville's Jack Ruhr Field is a little slice of baseball heaven.

For no team in that town ball loop, or pretty much anywhere, plays in a more sublime setting than Jack Ruhr Field.

From the BLEACHERS ...

CENTRAL — The Diamond Devils had a lead over St. Michael after 5 innings but the Saints rallied with 3 in the 6th to keep their record perfect. The rest of the Central is falling back to earth and the race appears to be for second place and the playoff seedings.

EAST— Maple Plain remains the only 'C' Team above .500. With Rockford's win Wednesday, every league team has won at least 2 of their first 10 games.

WEST—Who will get hot and win the interdivision games here? The Orphans reached .500 Wednesday and are the only team outside of St. Michael with a winning streak of more than one (They have a 2 game winning streak).

...HOT Times—When Howard Lake and Dassel-Cokato meet, everyone expects a low-scoring game with both teams pitching well and playing defense. This time the bats were hot, the arguments heated



The cornfields stretch from foul pole to foul pole and as far as the eye can glean. The infield and outfield are the very definition of verdant -- vividly green and perfectly manicured, by the Mudhens players themselves. Dozens of homespun, often hand-painted ads, looking more folk art than Madison Avenue, blanket the outfield walls and even pop up on the light poles.

Jack Ruhr Field is on Hwy. 61, 10 miles west of Red Wing and 11 miles south of Hastings. There's an adjacent lot, but many patrons park a good ways from the ballpark to avoid damage from foul balls.

Future State Tournament Sites:

- 2007 - Hamburg/Norwood
- 2008 - Chaska/Shakopee
- 2009 - Arlington/Gaylord

A baseball game is simply a nervous breakdown divided into nine innings. --Earl Wilson

and the tempers flaring as the Orphans put out a late fire to preserve the 12—11 victory over the Saints.

...RELATIVELY Speaking—Does anyone remember two brothers batting 1st and 2nd for any NSL team? The Orphans are doing that this year with Andy Gagnon and Luke Gagnon near the league leaders from those spots.

...Just when we think family members hitting one-two hasn't happened before, we get Maple Lake putting Darin and Tyler Decker one-two in their line-up last week.

...Has John Timpe found a new way to attack teams visiting the Diamond Devils field? At 8:00 PM, just as Dan Boisclair hit the ball against Monticello, the sprinklers went off, spraying the infield while the Polecats were making the play.



2006 STANDINGS (THRU 6/21/06)

<i>EAST</i>			
	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>G.B.</i>
MAPLE PLAIN	8	2	...
MOUND	4	4	3
LORETTO	2	5	4.5
ALBERTVILLE	3	8	5.5
ROCKFORD	2	6	6

<i>CENTRAL</i>			
	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>G.B.</i>
ST. MICHAEL	10	0	...
DASSEL-COKATO	7	3	3
DELANO	6	4	4
MAPLE LAKE	4	5	5.5
HUTCHINSON	4	5	5.5

<i>WEST</i>			
	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>G.B.</i>
HOWARD LK.	4	4	--
BUFFALO	4	5	.5
MONTICELLO	4	6	1
KINGSTON	2	7	2.5

A hot dog at the ball park is better than steak at the Ritz. --Humphrey Bogart

2006 STATS (THRU 6/20/06)

<i>EAST</i>				
<i>Player</i>	<i>AB</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>Ave</i>
B Mazer MP	23	9	12	522
A Gregg MP	30	7	14	467
D Brant Alb	30	4	14	467
Br Scanlon Lor	26	8	11	423
P Sycks Md	28	4	11	393
Bn Scanlon Lor	19	3	7	368
R Rassatt Roc	23	1	8	348
T Traen Lor	24	6	8	333
R Schaust Lor	28	4	9	321
T Klaers Alb	37	5	12	324
A Snyder Md	25	4	8	320
KC Johnson MP	35	10	11	314
G Barthel Md	26	1	8	308
B Schliinz MP	33	8	10	303

2B Leader	HR Leader
P Sycks 6	KC Johnson 2
RBI Leader	3B Leaders
A Gregg 9	7 Tied at 1

<i>Pitching Leaders</i>	<i>IP</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>K</i>	<i>ERA</i>
A Gregg MP	18	2	-1	13	1.50
J Juntunen Alb	28	1	-2	33	2.54
N Koch Lor	37	2	-3	6	2.92
J Lesser Roc	34	1	-3	18	4.24
M Mitchell Md	21	1	-2	14	4.29

<i>CENTRAL</i>				
<i>Player</i>	<i>AB</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>Ave</i>
M Freske SM	42	7	20	476
C Volkman SM	33	14	14	424
Bergstrom DC	33	8	14	424
D Decker ML	24	5	10	417
N Volkman SM	29	8	12	414
D Birkholz DC	35	8	14	400
T Thode Hut	33	3	13	394
N Johnson ML	23	2	9	391
T Decker ML	31	8	12	387
D Falde Del	34	6	13	382
M Peterson Del	34	6	13	382
K Jaunich Del	29	10	11	379
<i>Player</i>	<i>AB</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>Ave</i>
B Fobbe ML	29	5	11	379
A Dammann H	27	5	10	370
B Kneefe StM	36	12	13	361
C Raiche ML	36	10	13	360
L Klitzke Hut	25	4	9	360
A Brown Del	34	6	12	353
J Janzen Del	32	11	11	344
T Carlson StM	38	12	13	342
B Opsahl DC	33	5	11	333
Katzenmeyer H	24	1	8	333
C Fobbe ML	31	6	10	323
Burkstrand DC	25	6	8	320

2B Leader	RBI Leader
T Thode Hut 9	M Freske StM 15
HR Leader	3B Leaders
C Fobbe ML 2	T Decker ML 1
B Kneefe StM 2	T Carlson StM 1
C Volkman StM 2	

<i>Pitching Leaders</i>	<i>IP</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>K</i>	<i>ERA</i>
A McGrane StM	39	4	-0	39	1.13
J Riewer DC	23	2	-1	24	1.17
J Farenbaugh Hut	28	2	-2	15	2.54
J Janzen Del	34	2	-3	20	2.62
J Anderson ML	24	0	-2	12	4.88

<i>WEST</i>				
<i>Player</i>	<i>AB</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>Ave</i>
L Gagnon HL	16	3	8	500
A DesMarais HL	25	4	11	440
A Koch HL	19	5	8	421
B Aho Kin	28	4	11	393
A Gagnon HL	29	6	11	379
N Hill Buf	19	5	7	368
T Sonnek HL	29	5	10	345
B Weber Buf	21	1	7	333
K Holker Mon	31	6	10	323
Mt Loegering Mon	28	5	9	321
R Bethke Buf	22	5	7	318
Al Hendrickson Kin	23	3	7	304

2B Leader	HR Leader
7 tied at 2	None
RBI Leader	3B Leaders
M Donovan 6	B Borrell HL 1
	Erlandson Mon 1
	A Stein Mon 1

<i>Pitching Leaders</i>	<i>IP</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>K</i>	<i>ERA</i>
Mt Loegering Mon	13	1	-0	15	3.46
J Streich HL	20	3	-0	17	3.60
C Braun Buf	21	2	-2	21	5.49
C Picken Kin	19	1	-3	15	5.95