

The 2015 Spectator

Baseball is drama with an endless run and an ever-changing cast.



2015 Preview Issue

April 27, 2015

The North Star League Managers were asked to predict the order of finish for the upcoming season. Here are their predictions.



Again this year, the 13 managers voted on how the final seedings would look at the end of the 2015 season. The consensus seems to divide the league into three groups. The final predictions fall in line with how the teams have finished the last few years.

In the top group are Maple Lake, Howard Lake, Loretto and D-C. The pitching staffs of those four teams have carried them to the top of the standings recently and make them the favorites to get back to State.

Consistently picked for 5th, 6th and 7th are Delano, Hutchinson and Maple Plain. Since the top seven teams get a bye into the Regionals, these are very coveted spots.

The bottom five have been the same the last 2 years and are again predicted to finish here. Mound and Cokato were very close to finishing 7th last year, and even though they are picked for 8th and 9th, they both are given the best chance to climb into the top seven.

Buffalo is picked for 10th and Rockford barely edges out Montrose for the 11th spot.

THE CENTRAL (Class C teams)

- 1) Maple Lake – still the team to beat.
- 2) Howard Lake - lost some hitters from 2014
- 3) Loretto - young pitchers added to veteran group
- 4) D-C - projected to contend with other top three
- 5) Delano - young improving team
- 6) Hutchinson - steady club, pitching success needed.
- 7) Maple Plain - older team, needs new faces.
- 8) Mound - Looks like an improving team.
- 9) Cokato - came close to top 7 last year, could move up.
- 10) Buffalo - still young, projected to struggle yet.
- 11) Rockford - looking to rebound from tough 2014.
- 12) Waverly - won 2, looking to keep improving.

Baseball is the belly-button of our society. Straighten out baseball and you straighten out the world.

Changes for B Teams –

Albertville, Elk River, Monticello and Rogers decided to leave the north Star League and form their own league. They named the league the West Central league and added Ramsey and Hamel to make it a 6 team league. St Michael has remained in the North Star League and will join those six teams in Section eight when Section play starts. St Michael will play each team in the West Central League twice for seeding of the Sections.



MAPLE LAKE

2014 record 20-2

The Lakers look to defend their league title through defense and a dominating pitching staff, led by Jeremy Schmidt and Mitch Wurm. Their line-up features Graham Brown, Nate Johnson, Chad Raiche and Matt Bergstrom and produces a lot of runs . They continue to get contributions from Brian Russell and Ben Jungers, The Lakers are again expected to contend for the league title and make a deep run at State.

I NEVER SMILE WHEN I HAVE A BAT IN MY HANDS. THAT'S WHEN YOU'VE GOT TO BE SERIOUS



LORETTO

2014 league record 15-7

The Larks return the same line up they have had for a while, Brandon Scanlon, Kent Koch, Tyler and Nathan Maher, Ryan Schaust, Eric Schutte, Ryan Tapani, Luke Steinbach and Troy Beckman. The Larks have also received strong play from Jake Steinbach, Rob Doboszenskia and Josh Hanson. Pitching has long been a strength of the Larks and they will continue to count on a blend of veteran and young hurlers that should keep them in contention all year.

Baseball is an American icon. It is the Statue of Liberty, the bald eagle, "In God We Trust," Mount Rushmore, ice cream, apple pie, hot dogs and rally monkeys.

BASEBALL IS AMERICA



HOWARD LAKE

2014 record 20-2

The Orphans are always at the top of the league because of their pitching and this year they return three top pitchers, Adam Koch, Shane Khan, Shane Heber and expect help on the mound from four young pitchers, Mike Dockendorf, Jared Koch, Steve Gappa and Jordan Steffer. The Orphans lose John Stueven and Jason Mix from the middle of their lineup, but they return Dan Wacker, Eric Schreifels, Andy and Luke Gagnon, Chris Hardie, Steve Boger, Matt Donovan, Steve Bobrowske, Matt Streich and Jordan Jeseritz. The Orphans expected a tougher road back to State and will go as far as their pitching and defense take them.



DASSEL-COKATO

2014 record 15-7

The Saints count on a core group of experience player to lead their effort in 2015. Lucas Larson, John Hohnstein, Brent Opsahl and Eric Hanson anchor the team Pitching remains their strength as they can call on a whole roster full of pitchers. Jordan Flick, Tyler Zwibohmer Eric Hanson, and Jordan Danielson are counted on to anchor the staff. Four new players will add to the depth, pitcher Chris Kubitz, Andy Haataja, Cody Benson and Russ Fellbaum. The Saints should be a team on the rise and should contend for the title and one of the State tournament berths.



North Star League's B Team



ST. MICHAEL

2014 record

The Saints line-up remains intact from last year, anchored by Travis Enger, Alex Naasz, Sam Boisner and Dane Carlson. Max Ditty returns as the starting SS and Blake Schirmers is back after a productive 2014. Mitch Bauer and Alan Frank will lead the pitching staff as Jared Dehmer has moved out of state. Jeff Hackenmueller and Tyler Berg are expected to add more talent to the Saints this year.

St Michael's young guys are gaining experience and becoming veterans in town team ball and if they develop enough pitching depth, they should be a competitive team to play all year and prove to be a tough opponent in the post season.



HUTCHINSON

2014 record 11-11

The Huskies return most of their roster from last year so they will be experienced and they return a solid starting staff. Veterans Matt Timm, Justin Juergenson, Tim Thode, Brian Meuleners, Justin and Jake Wendland, Connor Kern and Phil Kuball will be counted on to lead the Huskies. New players Marcus Hahn, Jake Ault, Mitchell Kurth, Jayden Fleck, Jake Riley and Keegan Macemon will add depth, youth and athleticism. If the Huskies can find consistency in their relief staff and play solid defense, they feel they have the capability of making the top four.

Baseball is a game that boys play for fun and men play for keeps.



DELANO

2014 record 14-8

The Athletics count on a number of young players and mix in a few veterans as they continue to improve and compete with the top tier of the league. Top returning players are Kevin Jaunich, Adam Schleper, Matt Arens, Jake Gleason, Jesse Berg and Joey and Jeff Althoff. Hunter Hart and Tyler Hannan are making big contributions and they have added John Magee and Nate Meyers. The Athletics pin their hopes on young pitchers coming through with consistency. They will use their team speed and depth at many positions to improve their defense and win more games.

"There are three types of baseball player: those who make it happen, those who watch it happen and those who wonder what happens."



MAPLE PLAIN

2014 record 9-13

Another year and again no significant new players and no players lost. The Devils return a veteran core group – Adam Gregg, Ben Smith, Billy Soule, Lee Gregg, KC Johnson, Ryan Dwyer, Jeff Pitzengerger, Luke Hagen and Ryan Jacobov that should put runs on the board consistently. Adam Jacobson, and Pat McPherson provide a lot of innings on the mound. In order to improve the Diamond Devils need one more pitch and some depth to sub for players when other commitments cause them to miss games.



MOUND

2014 record 9-13

The Mallards are building around the top of their order, Cole Easley, Brett Skoog, Peter Harrell and Pete Sycks. Behind they have been getting solid performances from Dave Engel, Mike Mitchell, Nick Rettke and Ed Kutz. Pitching depth has been a problem and with Dan Hoy and Chris Harrell out until June, it is a question mark again in 2015. New pitcher Matt Eickman has been added and Grant Nagel is coming back from an injury in 2014 to hopefully throw some innings this year. Mound has been improving and if they pull out a few of their close games this year, they could move into the top seven and gain a bye to Regions.

Playing baseball for a living is like having a license to steal.



K O K A T O

2014 record 9-13

The Kings still rely on their veteran core of Eric and Vinnie Pokornowski, Billy Aho, Isaac Nelson and Tom Halonen. Their hope this year is that good years from Trent Krekelberg, Ethan Niemala, Zak Martin, Jake Smith, Michael Lefler and Luke Nelson will move them into the top seven. The Kings biggest question mark will be on the mound where they need to improve to move up in the standings.



BUFFALO

2014 record 5-17

Jon Eurlle and John Eckstein return at the top of the rotation and represent the best chance for Buffalo to be competitive, but pitching depth is still a concern. Other key returning players are Colton Haight, Jared Wycoff and Ramon Vega. Improved contributions from Mitch Annis, Jason Senger, Connor Martin and Kyle Cole could help a lot. Jake Duske will be back on the team and the Bulldogs have added Andrew Iverson and Nolan Triden as they look for more depth and consistency.



ROCKFORD

2014 record 3-19

The River Bandits return veterans Cody Kielsa, Anthony Brenner, Jason Lesser and Andy Jorges and along with Lance Reynolds, Bryan McCullum and Alex Hecht, they hope to win the close games they have been losing in recent years. The key to any improvement will need to come from the mound where the River bandits have been short on depth of a pitching staff.

I ain't afraid to tell the world that it don't take school stuff to help a fella play ball.



MONTROSE

2014 record 2-20

The Stingers won two games last year and hope for continued improvement in their quest to escape the cellar. Marcus Dalbec in centerfield, Ben Kunze and Kirby Moynagh will be the first three hitters in the lineup and should provide some offense. Neal Eidschink has been added to the staff to provide some experience on the mound and Joe Borders is expected to be an outstanding reliever for the Stingers. Also returning are Nick Zellmer and Tim Kunze and newly added for 2015 are Joe & Tyler Aalid, Eric Newman, Asher Khan, Kede Klahsen and Jake Sohns.