



# SPECTATOR 2016

We, the baseball fans of the world,  
petition that Opening Day should be  
an official Holiday.



April 2016

## 2016 North Star League

The St Michael Saints decided to leave the North Star League to join the other B teams in their Section and the Rockford River Bandits had to drop out at least for one year due to a lack of personnel to fill their roster. That leaves the North Star league as a league of 11 class C teams. Each team will play a 20 game league schedule playing each of the other 10 teams at home and away. The top seven will earn byes into the region and the bottom four will play a single elimination play off to determine which team will be the eighth seed at regions.

## Predictions

Again this year, the league's managers predicted how the teams would finish. Like most predictions, the managers are predicting the teams will do about the same as they have done in recent years. Maple Lake figures to compete for the title again and is the consensus pick for first. The only chink on the armor was that due to injuries to their pitching staff in Regions, they were unable to make it back to state. If the staff is healthy this year, the coaches expect the Lakers to come out on top. The next four teams are so closely bunched that there are no clear choices for second through 5th. The teams are Howard Lake, Loretto, Hutchinson and Delano, all teams with a recent history of finishing in the top five and all a legitimate contender for the title and for a state berth. The next four teams D-C, Maple Plain, Mound and Cokato are also bunched closely together for the sixth through ninth spots. The importance of finishing 6th or 7th is that those two teams get a direct pass to the Regions. Mound and Cokato made the top seven last year and D-C and Maple Plain have a history of making the top seven until last year. Buffalo is predicted for tenth as the managers historically wait to see improvement in the win column before predicting a higher finish. Montrose also needs to earn some wins on the field before they will be predicted to escape the bottom spot.



A game so fine it's played on Diamonds.



# 2016 Preview Edition

**Buffalo 6 -16** The Bulldogs believe they have added some better arms to their staff this year and can make a run at the top half of the standings. They return Colton Haight, Jon Eurlle, Jason Senger, J.D. O'Donnell and Ramon Vega. Added to the roster will be Eric Newman, Kevin Kray, Jonathan Senger, Wyatt Brings and Luke Merz. Other players coming back and expected to contribute are Tommy Eckstein, Ramon Vega Jr., Nolan Triden and Mitch Annis. The only veteran not returning is John Eckstein. Buffalo's strengths lie in their ability to make contact at the plate and expect pitching to become a strength. If they can play defense consistently and come up with clutch hits, they may be able to reach their goals.



**Cokato 9-13** In 2015, the Kernels earned the seventh spot and the automatic entry into the Regionals. The Kernels core of Billy Aho, Vinnie Pokornowski, Tom Halonen, Isaac Nelson, Abel West, Nick Main and Steve Schmitt returns to try to continue their climb up the standings. Others counted on are Dalton Asplin, Ethan Niemela, Zach Martin, Joe Carlson and Luke Nelson. The Kernels believe they have the speed and talent to play defense and get around the bases, but feel they need to increase their attack to get more runners on base. Cokato is predicted to be in competition for that 7th spot again with forecasts calling for a 6th to 10th place finish

**D-C 9-13** The Saints endured a difficult 2015 as injuries and close losses got them off to a slow start before a late season surge brought them to the brink of earning a direct route to the Regionals as they finished with the 8 seed. Jordan Flick, Lucas Larson, John Hohenstein, Brandon Opsahl, Eric Hanson, Brice Berggren and Kyle Johnson return. Trent Thineson will be available for the whole season and Mike Loftler will add to the staff when his college season ends. Karson Forsman will be available for weekend games. D-C expects to return to their traditional spot high in the standings if they can avoid injuries and hit better with less strikeouts.



**Delano 15-7** The A's may be the most well rounded team boasting a good core of veterans, Kevin Jaunich, Jay Stevens, Jesse Berg as well as a talented bunch of younger players coming on board, Nate Meyers, Brady Miller and Hunter Hart from the recent successful seasons at Delano High. They can mix in veteran pitchers, Matt Arens and Jake Gleason and young ones, Zack Iten and Tyler Hannon. They have speed and power and good defensive players. New additions for 2016 are Tom Druk, Hank Cautin, Nate Norman, Jordan Schramel and Cody Kielsa. Lost from last year are Trevor Jaunich, Cody Mathison, Toby Hanson and Jeremy Maschino.. Delano has all of the tools to compete for the top spots and is widely considered to be one of the top four teams in the league.

**Howard Lake 17-5** The Lakers have been near the top spot the last few years, but the loss of three key players could make the run for the top more challenging in 2016. Shane Kahn, Chris Hardie and Luke Gagnon will not be returning. Still the Lakers return many veterans - Adam Koch, Shane Heber, Matt Donovan, Steve Bobrowske, Eric Schreifels, Dan Wackler, Andy Gagnon, Steve Boger, Sam Kittock, Riley and Jake Gruenhagen, Brett Ahsenmacher and Matt Streich. Also available for mound duty this year will be Mike Dockendorf, Jared Koch and Steve Gappa. Because of all of their tournament experience, defense and pitching depth, you can't count the Lakers out of the running for one of the top spots.



Life is a Game. Baseball is Serious.



**Hutchinson 16-6** The last few years, the Huskies have settled in just behind the top teams, but solidly in the top half. This year their expectations are to take one of the top four spots. Returning for Hutch are Jake Wendland, Mitch Kurth, Jayden Fleck, Marcus Hahn, Keegan Macemon, Connor Kern, Jayden Juergenson, Fernando Villegas and Jake Arlt. Not playing for Hutch this year are Josh Wendland, Brian Mueleners and Cody Nielsen. The Huskies have plenty of veterans in their line up so they expect to mount an attack that can score runs. Their goals for winning more are to improve their defense and provide better relief pitching to hold leads late in games.



**Loretto 12-10** The Larks return a solid lineup featuring veterans Tyler Maher, Kent Koch, Ryan Schaust, Nathan Maher, Eric Schutte and Luke Steinbach. Pitchers Jake Braun and George Faue anchor a staff that will include Colton Petron and be joined by Jason Lesser. Joining the lineup will be Andy Jorges and expected to increase production are returnees Jake Steinbach, Will Wade, Drew VanDehey and Nick Pruden. Centerfield will look different with Brandon Scanlon not patrolling that area anymore. Also gone from last year are Ryan Tapani, Troy Beckman, Herb Koch Jr. and Rob Doboszanski. Loretto has competed for the top few spots and a state tourney berth for quite a few years and are predicted to be in one of the top four spots again this year.

**Maple Lake 21-1** The Lakers expect to contend for another title in 2016 by using the effective, experienced pitching arms of Jeremy Schmidt, Mitch Wurm, Brian Russell and Todd Fuller. The offense is also battle tested and playoff experienced led by Graham Brown, Luke Fobbe, Riley & Dusty Decker and Matt Bergstrom. Added for this year are Donnie Mavencamp, Hunter Malacek, Nate Moss and Brock Fobbe. The Lakers will be missing Nate Johnson, Brian Redemske, Bert Marsnik and Cal Redemske due to retirements and injuries. Maple Lake should be right there at the end of the season if they can keep their pitching arms healthy for the entire year. Predicted by most to win the league championship.



**Maple Plain 9-13** The Diamond Devils core of Adam Gregg, Lee Greg, KC Johnson, Ryan Dwyer, Pat McPherson and Jeff Pitzengerger all return but are making it to less games each year. Younger players Sean Geelan, Danny Fafinski, Mitch Carlson and new addition Tommy Traen will be counted on to carry a large part of the load this year. Healthy pitching arms have been an issue the last couple of years. The Devils hope for Ben Stavig to earn more innings and a return to the mound by Adam Jacobson as well as some innings from Adam Gregg, Pat McPherson and Billy Soule. The return of Judson McKown could add greatly to the staff's effectiveness. When Maple Plain fields their full team, they can beat anyone, but they often don't have everyone available and that has led to inconsistency in their record.

**Montrose 1-21** The Stingers have been at the bottom of the standings since they started in 2013. This year they look for new additions Jordan Steffer, Cole Hanson and Austin Koehler to join Ben Kunze and TJ Aalid on the mound as they shoot for more competitively pitched games. Kirby and Robb Moynagh return as leaders in the field and expect Marcus Dalbec, Ben Kunze and Jordan Steffer along with Joe and Tyler Aalid to make important contributions. The Stingers keep a positive outlook and expect to improve, win some games and compete for higher spots in the standings.



**Mound 10-12** The Mallards came within one game of making it to state and look to make that final jump this year. They return everyone except possibly Dan Hoy who is out of state for at least the early part of the season. Still Pat Regan returns to lead the staff and the line up that includes Cole Easley, Brett Skoog, Peter Harrell, Pete Sycks, Dave Engel, Mike Mitchell, Nick Rettke, Ed Kutz, Colin Mayer and Tyler Hebig. Evan Kennedy will get plenty of opportunities on the mound as will newcomer Patrick Bottenfield and returnee Mitch Dunaway. Mound has a nice mix of veterans and youth that has been steadily improving and with a little more consistency may take that final step to state.



Baseball is life, the rest is just details.

