The 2017 Spectator

2017 Preview Issue

EAT.
SLEEP.
BASEBALL.
REPEAT.

Manager's Predicted Finish

2017 presents a big challenge for the North Star league managers to correctly predict how the standings will end up. The first problem is that 8 teams last year were so close that we didn't know who would be first and who would be eighth until the last Sunday of the season and five of them tied for third to seventh place. The second difficulty is that three regular contenders, Howard Lake, D-C and Maple Lake have lost some major contributors from their recent rosters and may be in rebuilding mode this year. Who will rise and who will drop some?

The consensus choice for the title is **Hutchinson.** After a slow start last year, they finished as the hottest team in the league and made the deepest run in the State tourney. In addition, they return everybody.

Loretto and **Delano** tied as the second choice. (After last year's finish, who is surprised we had a tie). Both teams have been strong the last few years and return their top pitchers.

Howard Lake was chose to be fourth, Ma**ple Lake** to be fifth and **D-C** to be sixth. Those teams are habitually near the top and it will be interesting to see if they contend or slip some as they recover from their roster departures.

Buffalo is chosen seventh as a team on the rise that lead the league early last year and returns a good core of players.

Maple Plain is picked just slightly behind Buffalo for eighth. The Diamond Devils return their veteran line up, but have not added much youth in the last few years and need to find more consistency to reach the top seven.

As a nation we are dedicated to keeping physically fit and parking as close to the ballpark as possible.

2016 Final Standings

	W	L	Pct	GB
Howard Lake	15	5	.750	...
D-C	13	7	.650	2
Loretto	12	8	.600	3
Maple Plain	12	8	.600	3
Delano10	12	8	.600	3
Maple Lake	12	8	.600	3
Hutchinson	12	8	.600	3
Buffalo	10	10	.500	5
Cokato	8	12	.400	7
Mound	4	16	.200	11
Montrose	0	20	.000	15

Litchfield has been predicted ninth, partly because the league's top 8 have been consistently competitive and Litchfield is relatively unknown throughout the league.

Cokato and **Mound** are tied as the picks for 10th and 11th . Both teams have contended for the top seven spots in recent years and would not be a surprise to bounce back and win more games in 2017, but as good as the teams ahead of them have been, it would appear they both are slotted here because that's where they were last year.

The consensus for **Waverly/Montrose** is last place and is an understandable choice until they win some games and prove they can move up the standings.

The NORTH STAR LEAGUE

Yesterday's Homeruns don't win today's games.

Buffalo 10-10 The Bulldogs started out last year surprising a lot of teams and they were at or near the top of the standings for quite a while. This year they expect that winning experience to extend to the whole season. After falling to the eighth seed in 2016, they have their sights set on a top four seed this year. The core of Jon Eurle, Colton Haight, JD O'Donnell, Carter Vogt, Brett Renshaw, Kevin Kray and   Jason Senger return and bring plenty of talent and experience. Adding to the Bulldogs' confidence is the presence of Eric Newman, Tommy Eckstein, Johnny Senger and Ramon Vega Jr. also added to the roster are Jake Duske and Isaac Noble. The Bulldogs are strong at the top of the order, need more help from the bottom third and appear to have plenty of arms to handle the pitching chores.
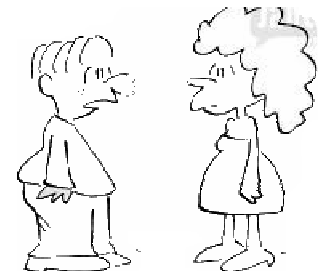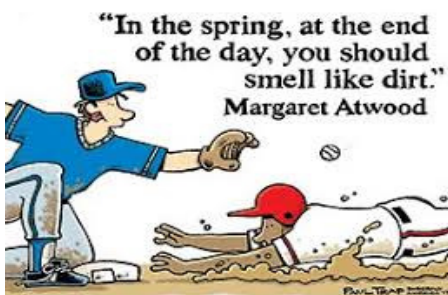
Cokato 8-12 The Kernels hope to move back out of the bottom five and earn a bye into the Regions. To do that they will rely on a solid batting order featuring Tom Halonen, Isaac Nelson, Luke Nelson, Dalton Asplin and other returning veterans. They will count on more from Isak Haataja David Raisanen and newcomer Luke Morris. The Kernels weakness appears to be consistency and depth on the mound. If Cokato receives enough good innings from their pitching staff, they could move back into the middle of the standings.

D-C 13-7 The Saints expect to be rebuilding this year. Jordan Flick and Tyler Zweibhomer return to anchor the staff, but not returning are Jordan Danielson, Eric Hanson, Kyle Kasmarek, Karson Forsman and Lucas Larson. Returning in the field are John Hohenstein, Brandon Opsdahl, Andy Haataja, Bryce Berggren, Trent Thinesen, Kyle Johnson and Andrew Carlson. The Saints need more innings this year from pitchers like Mitch Kurtzweg and Michael Loffler. New to the team is Mason Marelic. D-C is another team that believes this will be an interesting year, expects to play good defense, work to score runs and hope to improve throughout the year.

Delano 12-8 The A's pitching staff throws strikes and keeps them competitive which should keep them contending for top spots in the standings. Their goal is to tighten up their defense and find a line up that produces consistently and they have many veterans to choose from to get the job done. Adam Schleper, Jake Gleason, Matt Arens, Brady Miller, Jeff Althoff, Hunter Hart, Josh Hiltner and Jesse Berg return. Players that could help the cause are Nate Norman, Jordan Schramel, James Otto Jeremy Maschino. Delano is expected to have a winning year and could compete for the top spot this year..

Howard Lake 15-5 The Orphans head into 2017 as the defending champions of the league, but their roster will look a little different this year with the departures of Shane Heber, Chris Hardie, Adam Koch, Eric Schreifels, Steve Bobrowski, Steve Gappa, Jared Kadrie and the limited availability of Dan Wacker. The line up may need to work a little harder to score with the loss of some of those hitters, but they still return a deep pitching staff and know how to play defense. Returning are Jared Koch, Ben Borrell, Jake & Riley Gruenhagen, Mike Dockendorrf, Matt Donovan, Steve Boger, Matt Streich, Brett Ahsenmacher, Sam & Max Kittock. For 2017, they have added Zach Kuefler, Tyler Hannon, Derek Antil, Tom & Tony Borrell and Brad Bickman. The Orphans goal this year is to improve as the year goes on and advance to the Regions.

Hutchinson 12-8 After a slow start in 2016 , the Huskies came on strong and made a deep run inn the State tourney. That success has lead to high expectations and predictions that Hutch will be the favorite to win the league title this year. They lost no one from last year's team and this year hope to see more results from Matt Piechowski, Cody and Jake Arlt, Marcus Hahn, Jayden Fleck and Keegan Macemon and have added Travis Trettin, Chandler Kurth, Caleb Marquardt and Jeremiah Vande Steeg to their already potent roster.

"In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt."
Margaret Atwood

You want a June wedding? Right in the middle of baseball season.

Litchfield (new to league for 2017) The Blues are excited to join the North Star League for 2017 and bring a veteran group of players. Key contributors on their team are Josh Johnson, Toby Chellin, Kaleb Kalkbrenner, Derek and Dylan Koll, Carson Deal and Jake Johnson. The Blues lost four players from last year's roster, but have added five new ones and expect 7 guys, Stan Ridgeway, Dylan Kotzer, Jake Schultz, Jake Jones, Cody Beavers, Chris Sundmark and Kal Volinsky to step and make significant contributions this year.

Loretto 12-8 The Larks again return a core of veterans to their line up featuring veterans Tyler Maher, Kent Koch, Ryan Schaust, Nathan Maher, Jason Lesser, Andy Jorges, Eric Schutte and Luke Steinbach. Pitchers Jake Braun, George Faue and Colton Petron as well as Lesser can throw a lot of innings. Will Wade, Drew VanDehey and Nick Pruden contributed more last year and are looked to continue that play. With everyone returning and a good deep pitching staff, Loretto should be in the running for the top spot in the league.

Maple Lake 12-8 The Lakers will sport a different look this year as they will be without Jeremy Schmidt, Chad Raiche, Dusty Decker and Brian Russell. Still the Lakers return Matt Bergstrom, Riley Decker, Luke Fobbe, Todd Fuller Graham Brown and Donnie Mavencamp. Also returning are Brian Redemske and Mitch Wurm. With all the changes, the Lakers will be younger and faster and need to execute more of a small ball strategy. They still have a potent enough line up to score runs. There success will most likely depend on their success on the mound and developing pitching depth.

Maple Plain 12-8 The Diamond Devils core of Adam Gregg, Lee Greg, KC Johnson, Ryan Dwyer,

Pat McPherson and Billy Soule are back and give Maple Plain a very veteran presence. Younger players Sean Geelan, Danny Fafinski and 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. Ben Stavig, Judson McKown and Adam Jacobson will be counted on to provide innings with relief help from Adam Gregg, Pat McPherson and Billy Soule. Again this year, a full Maple Plain team can beat anyone, but they often don't have everyone available and that has led to inconsistency in their record.

Mound 4-16 The Mallards fell back last year as they had to rely too much on ace Pat Regan on the mound. If they can find pitching depth to eat up some innings, they have a good enough roster and batting order to score plenty of runs. Returning for 2017 are Cole Easley, Peter Harrell, Peter Sycks, Dave Engel, Mike Mitchell, Mitch Kern, Nick Rettke, Pat Regan, Chris Harrell, Evan Kennedy, Reid Dahl, Michael Abegglen and Shane Henry. The Mallards are hopeful that Dan Hoy will be helpful on the mound. New players Jerry Krahl and Patrick Bottenfield have been added and Mound believes a return to the top seven is within reach for this year.

 Montrose/Waverly 0-20 The Stingers will need improvement from their young players if they are going to start winning games and climb out of the bottom spot in the standings. They will count on Jordan Steffer, Cole Hanson and Kirby Moynagh to anchor the line up with contributions from Ben Kunze and Jake Sohns. The Stingers bring a lot of players anxious to play ball and a positive outlook expecting to compete and push to knock off some teams in 2017.

I CAN'T KEEP CALM I'M A BASEBALL MOM

Trying to sneak a pitch past him is like trying to sneak a sunrise past a rooster.

FIRST I HAVE TO ADJUST MY GLOVES, TUG MY SLEEVE, SPIT IN MY HAND, CLAP, TOUCH MY NOSE...

WHY BASEBALL PLAYERS WOULD MAKE LOUSY SURGEONS