

# The 2020 Spectator

2020 Preview Issue



Don't let the fear of striking out hold you back

## Manager's Predicted Finish

### Predictions

For 2020 the North Star League managers predict that there will be four distinct groups. A top contending group, a few teams slightly behind that top group, a tight battle among three teams for that coveted seventh spot and 2 teams that need to take a significant step to escape the bottom spots.

Hutchinson's second place finish in the league and the State tourney makes them the odds on favorite for the league title with defending champion Delano picked right behind them Both return a lot of the players they had on their rosters last year Both have strong lineups and deep pitching staffs which makes picking them as contender is a logical choice.

Three teams were placed in the group of teams that are most likely to push Hutch and Delano. Those teams are Maple Lake, picked third, Buffalo slotted fourth and Howard Lake close behind for fifth. All three had winning seasons and finished 2019 battling for the third seed.

Four teams are bunched together in the most competitive spot - gaining the 7<sup>th</sup> seed and earning a bye into the Regional., Cokato was chosen 6<sup>th</sup> based on improving their wins total in 2019. The seventh, eighth and ninth spots ended in a tie between Maple Plain, D-C and Loretto. Those are the three teams that battled for the seventh seed last year and if the manager's predictions prove correct it will be a competitive and interesting battle for the coveted seven seed again.

Litchfield and Montrose/Waverly were the bottom two last year and will need to prove they can win more games before the managers move them out of the bottom two.

The best guess is that all teams will be competitive and many teams will be tightly bunched. As usual we can expect some team will surprise everyone by surging in the win column and others will suffer a few more losses than expected.

### WILL THERE BE BASEBALL?

Everyone is hopeful, no one knows for sure. Will the schedule be for less games?

Will the playoffs and State Tourney happen at all or on a different schedule?

It is not spring without the crack of the bat and the pop of the glove.

The North Star League is looking forward to a 2020 season, but also hopes everyone will stay safe and use reasonable precautions.

### 2019 Final Standings

	W	L	Pct	GB
Delano	19	1	.950	...
Hutchinson	16	4	.800	3
Howard Lake	13	7	.650	6
Buffalo	12	8	.600	7
Cokato	11	9	.550	8
Maple Lake	11	9	.550	8
Maple Plain	9	11	.450	10
D-C	7	13	.350	12
Loretto	7	13	.350	12
Litchfield	4	16	.200	15
Waverly	1	19	.050	18

The  
NORTH  
STAR  
LEAGUE



**Buffalo 12-8 in 2019** The Bulldogs again return a veteran line-up featuring Jake Duske, JD O’Donnell, Colton Haight, Brett Renshaw and Ramon Vega Jr. A veteran pitching staff is led by Jon Eurlle and Carter Vogt. Also counted on this year will be John Weber, Cal James, Tommy Eckstein, Eathan Soeffker, Damien Biegert, Eric Newman and John Fussy. The Bulldogs are counting on the younger players starting to mix in with the more experienced players. Buffalo should be able to score plenty and if pitching depth can support their main starters, the Bulldogs should be near the top of the league and deserve to feel optimistic.

**Cokato 11-9 in 2019** The Kernels made the largest jump in the standings last year and will be trying to maintain that winning vibe. The pitching was outstanding in 2019 and Steve Shmidt returns, but the Pokornowski brothers will not be back, Eric retired and Vinnie moved away. The leaders of the team, Jason Ross, Billy Aho and Adam Barnaal do return. Second year players - Jackson Martin, Austin Kantola and Sanders Asplin will need to have productive years. Line-up regulars coming back include Tom Halonen, Baker Morris and Isaac Nelson and strong seasons from them will be needed as well to maintain the Kernel’s winning ways. Cokato has long depended on defense to hold opponents down and last year, their offense improved enough to be above .500. The biggest challenge for 2020 will be finding pitching depth.

**D-C 7-13 in 2019** The Saints are relying on Jordan Flick, Tyler Zweibhomer and Ben Lindquist to give them a strong presence on the mound and return them to the top seven seeds in 2020 Their line-up will once again include John Hohenstein, Andy Haataja, James Howell and Tyler Brandel. In addition, Lucas Larson is returning and they’ve added former Huskie Dylan Weber to the roster. The Saints are always a competitive team and believe if they learn to pull out the close games, they will go a long way this year.

**Delano 19-1 in 2019** The A’s had one of the best regular seasons in league history, but cooled off in the Regions and have definitely set their sights on making the State Tourney in 2020. Back again from their title team are many good veterans and experienced younger players like Hunter Hart, Toby Hanson, Adam Schleper, Matt Arens, Jeremy Maschino, Jack Paulson, Brady Miller, Nate Norman and James Otto. Younger players expected to make extensive contributions are Matt Carson, Tucker Hart, Jackson Royer and Max Otto. Jeff Althoff is also returning for 2020. Players missing whose contributions will need to be replaced are Tyler Wolfe, Marcus Wittmer and Jordan Schramel. Delano plays good defense, has plenty of speed, can hit and plenty of pitching depth. If they stay healthy, the A’s expect to have a good chance to go back to State.



Social Distancing,  
Ugh

Hitting is fifty percent  
above the shoulders



## The NORTH STAR LEAGUE

The game is won 90 feet at a time



*It's amazing what you can do in this game with a heart and a brain*

**Howard Lake 13-7 in 2019** How many years have I said the Orphans formula for success seems to include top flight pitching backed up by a strong, solid defense. Mike Dockendorf and Jared Koch lead the staff again and the Orphans expect some young hurlers to develop this year. Back in the line-up are Steve Boger, Matt Donovan, Mitch and Alex Bauman, Brad Bickman, Matt Streich, Zach Kuefler, Brad Bickmann, Jake Gruenhagen Cory Dehn and Noah Bush. Having steady proven pitchers going for the Orphans always makes them tough to beat. Their young players have continued to develop and find ways to score enough runs to win. Even though Howard Lake may be in a light rebuilding mode, they have not seen any drop off in wins or State tourney appearances so they expect to compete again in 2020.

**Hutchinson 16-4 in 2019** The Huskies finished second in the league and second in the State tournament last year which leads to a lot of optimistic goals for them in 2020. Hutch returns most of the core players like Jake Wendland, Matt Piechowski, Eva Kohli, Jayden Fleck, Jeremiah Van De Steeg, Cody Arlt, Marcus Hahn and Noah Corrow. Hutch also has a long list of contributors that could crack the lineup or help the staff – Tyler Schiller, Lane Glaser, Dan Lyons, Brady Zackrison, Dan Van De Steeg, Jacob Kraft and Mitchell Reiner. Not surprisingly, the Huskies expect their offense to produce lots of runs and their defense to keep them competitive. Depth in their pitching staff is listed as a possible weakness, but everyone expects that Hutch will still be in the battle for the championship and may go deep into the State tourney again.

**Litchfield 4-16 in 2019** The Blues add Owen Boerema and Dylan Koll to their pitching staff and along with the returning arms of Joey Hyde and Stan Ridgeway they expect to be more competitive this year. Core players back this year are Matt Spreiter, Jake Jones, Andrew Loch, Brady Smith and Joey Hyde. Hopefully contributions from Cody Klabunde, Ezra and Afton Kaping, Jack Ramthun and Tyler and Peterson will fill holes in the lineup. Litchfield's needs to find more consistency offensively to score more runs. They are counting on their better depth on the mound to carry them to more wins than they have racked up the last couple of years and a chance to move up in the standings.

**Loretto 7-13 in 2019** The Larks roster is now a good mix of experienced players and youth. The group of veterans returning are Tyler Maher, Kent Koch, Nathan Maher, Eric Schutte, Colton Petron, Danny Schroeder, George Faue and Drew VanDehey. They bring a powerful line up and an improved pitching staff to the park each game. Younger players Hunter Petron, Will Reschenberg, Tyler Gearin, Noah Schneider and Keenan Hodgkin and Bradly Koskie gained some valuable experience in 2019 and add depth to the experienced core group. The return of George Faue should bolster the Larks pitching staff and if their pitchers stay healthy Loretto has a good shot to move back up in the standings.



Pressure is a word that is misused in our vocabulary.  
When you start thinking of pressure,  
it's because you've started to think of failure.

**It's hard to  
beat a person  
who never  
gives up.**

THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT THINGS IN LIFE ARE GOOD FRIENDS AND A STRONG BULLPEN.



**Maple Lake 11-9 in 2019** The Lakers have had one of the strongest pitching staffs in the league for quite a few years and that should continue if they stay healthy. The line—up returns a strong veteran core in Luke Fobbe, Riley Decker, Mitch Wurm, Derek Rachel, Donnie Mavenkamp and Matt Bergstrom. They also will rely on Grant Mergan, Nick Preisinger, Jordan Tanner and some current high school players to add to their depth. Maple Lake is a team that can score runs offensively. play good defense behind a strong staff, and has a history of winning. No reason the Lakers won't be in contention for high seeds this year.



**Maple Plain 9-11 in 2019** The Diamond Devils gained another year of experience for their young core of players - TJ Carlson, Tommy Traen, Colton Peters, Jake Hartman, Logan Kinsel, Calvin Rippberger, Anthony Tavella, Kevin Kvern and Max Marshall. Add in seasoned players KC Johnson and Billy Soule and Maple Plain should be able to run a competitive lineup out there every game. They could use a power hitter and they need their pitching staff to be healthy. Judson McKown and Max Marshall and Lance Reynolds hurled the most innings last year. To improve this year, the Devils need to develop better depth in their pitching staff and keep their productive arms healthy.



**Montrose/Waverly 1-19 in 2019** The Stingers took a light step backward last year after showing improvement for a couple of years. The main problem is pitching as they lost some promising arms for last year's team and simply gave up too many runs. They again return Kirby Moynagh, Brady Boddeker, Ben Kunze, Bill Aamodt and Andrew Moynagh. Alex Smothers, Robbie Knight and Ty and JT Weiman will be counted on more heavily in 2020. New additions Evan Ayres, Scott Kaminski and Mark Ricke could provide some needed depth. The Stingers believe they can hit and score runs, but need to produce on the mound and prove they can stop their opponents from scoring.



**North Star League Players of the decade**

A dedicated fan proposed the following players as the players of the past decade - I'm sure this could start some social media discussion.

**Alphabetically his 28 choices are:**

- Billy Aho - Joe Althoff - Matt Bergstrom - Jordan Danielson
- Mike Dockendorf - Jon Eurle - Jordan Flick - Luke Fobbe
- Colton Haight - Tyler Hanson - Chris Hardie - Hunter Hart
- Jon Hohenstein - KC Johnson - Justin Juergenson - Adam Koch
- Kent Koch - Jason Lesser - Tyler Maher - Chad Raiche
- Jeremy Schmidt - Eric Schreifels - Billy Soule - Matt Timm
- Dan Wackler - Jake Wendland - Mitch Wurm - Tyler Zweibohmer



I have baseball in my blood, baseball is all I've ever wanted to do.