

The 2022 Spectator

2022 Preview Issue



Manager's Predicted Finish

Predictions

For 2022 the North Star League managers predictions are more diverse than in past seasons. So often, predictions for the coming year match up well with the previous year's standings. With last year's four team battle going in to the final days of the season, there is a less clear prediction as to who will emerge on top in 2022.

Delano, Buffalo and Hutchinson seem to be the teams to beat with the predictions ending in a virtual tie. Loretto is seen as the one team that competed to the very end for last year's championship that is expected to drop back a spot and finish fourth. Maple Lake is picked to rebound from a losing season last year and finish fifth although they received many votes for ending in the top four.

After the top five, Litchfield and Howard Lake were in a tie for sixth and seventh place and the coveted byes into Regionals. D-C was close behind them and a clear choice to land the 8th place seed.

Maple Plain and Cokato were the choices for 9th and 10th with their seasons being largely determined by which pitchers step up and provide staff stability. Waverly and new entry Rockford are pegged for 11th and 12th. Waverly because they need to prove they can escape the bottom spot and Rockford because they are unknown with a young roster and only a little Town team experience.

The best guess, as usual, is that all teams will be competitive and tie breakers will come into play at the end of the season. It is also likely that we can expect some team will surprise everyone by surging in the win column and others will suffer a few more losses than expected.

A game so fine it's played on a diamond

With the addition of the Rockford Crows, the North Star League teams will play a 22 game league schedule. One home game and one away game against each league team.

Baseball is religion without the mischief.

God watches over drunks and third baseman.

2021 Final Standings

	W	L	Pct	GB
Hutchinson	16	4	.800	...
Buffalo	15	5	.750	1
Delano	15	5	.750	1
Loretto	15	5	.750	1
Howard Lake	11	9	.550	5
Litchfield	9	11	.450	7
Maple Lake	8	12	.400	8
Maple Plain	7	13	.350	9
D-C	6	14	.300	10
Cokato	6	14	.300	10
Montrose	2	18	.100	14
Rockford	—	—	—	—

Umpiring is the only job where a man "has to be perfect the first day" and "improve over the years."

The NORTH STAR LEAGUE



Buffalo 15-5 in 2021 The Bulldogs should be at or near the top of the standings again in 2022. They have a strong, deep line-up led by Colton Haight, J.D. O'Donnell, Justin Johnson, and Ramon Vega Jr. The veteran pitching staff starts with Jon Eurlle and John Weber. Ethan Hansen should be back from injury to bolster the staff. New players Grant is The Bulldogs look to add 3 or 4 new players in 2022, Grant Limke, Josh Gavin, Cameron Green, and Adam Braun. All four played for the Buffalo Legion team in 2021, Limke will fill some holes in the infield and get time on the mound. Green and Braun will look to get time in the outfield and Gavin will look to eat some innings on the mound. The Bulldogs expect to compete for the league championship, advance through the Regionals and get back into the State tournament.

Cokato 6-14 in 2021 The Kernels slid back last year after making a strong showing in 2020. Which team will appear in 2022? The answer to that will be found on the mound. Steve Schmidt returns, who else will step up and throw a lot of innings. The line up has plenty of veterans in Tom Halonen, Isaac Nelson, Ethan Niemela and Bill Aho. They also return Alan Pietila, Jason Ross, Austin Kantola, Sanders Asplin and Brad Wheeler. Who will step up – it could be Grayson Londerville, Kyan Lynk, Riley Pennala or Chad Koivisto as well as new players Jake Pietila and Nate Nelson. The biggest challenge for 2022 remains finding pitching depth.

D-C 6-14 in 2021 The Saints bring everyone back with the goal of getting back to state. Like many teams, their search for consistent pitching will determine their place in the standings. Veteran Jordan Flick returns to anchor the staff. The Saints improved their offensive production last year and will look for continued improvement from a line-up consisting of these other returning players: Tyler Brandel, Michael Howell, Dylan Weber, Noah Halonen, Michael Leffler, Gus Flick, Collin Krick, Paul Jacobson, Ben Lindquist, Cy Flick, Steve Boger, James Howell Jim Althoff. Players that could step up and contribute more in 2022 are Toby Colline, Ethan Brandel, Josiah Bullivant, Nikolai Niemela, Paul Vetsch, Jacob Niemela, Jayce Olthoff and Ethan Mayer. The Saints believe they will be competitive and if their pitchers come through consistently, they expect to get back to State.

Delano 15-5 in 2021 The A's return almost all of the players who have made them contenders the last few years. Toby Hanson, Trevor Jaunich, Mike Weber, Jeremy Maschino, Adam Schleper, Jack Paulson, Nate Norman and James Otto all return. Oran Hinkle, Austin Schneider and Ty Wiemen are names that may become more familiar this year. Colin Lommel, Cade Bruett are new this year and Tanner Kroells returns from injury for 2022. Scott Benjamin and Hunter Hart are not returning which could hurt the offense some, but the pitching and defense are as good as ever. If they offense continue to produce and arms stay healthy, the A's look lie a real contender for the championship and a state berth.

**Winners make goals,
losers make excuses**

All ballplayers should quit when it starts
to feel as if all the baselines run uphill.



I think I throw the ball as hard as anyone.
The ball just doesn't get there as fast.



The NORTH STAR LEAGUE



Howard Lake 11-9 in 2021 Year after year, The Orphans rely on top flight pitching to stay close in every contest. Mike Dockendorf and Jared Koch return to handle the bulk of work on the mound. Jake Gruenhagen, Mitch Baumann, Sam Kittock and Matt Streich lend a veteran presence to the line-up. Brad Bickman, Cole Machewski and Bennett Anderson are expected to make big contributions this year. While Brock Goelz, Noah Bush and Alex Bauman will be playing in summer leagues, but the Orphans are hopeful they will return late in the season to help out. The Orphans continually bring good pitching and excellent defense to each contest and expect that they will be competitive all season..

Hutchinson 16-4 in 2021 The Huskies came out of the season ending scramble as champions after four teams were tied for first during the last few days of the season. Emerging in first place along with their recent success at State has provided plenty of confidence and expectations of more success.. Hutch returns most of the core players like Jake Wendland, Matt Piechowski, Jayden Fleck, Cody Arlt, Marcus Hahn, John DeRock and Tyler Schiller. Noah Corrow returns and Jake Wyffels has been added. Also expected to make contributions are Zach Keseske, Lane Glaser, Billy Marquardt and Mitchell Reiner Not surprisingly, the Huskies expect their offense to produce lots of runs and their defense to keep them competitive as they retain their main group of fielders and hitters. If they have a weakness, it could lack of depth and consistency in their pitching staff. The Huskies still look like one of the teams competing for the top spots in the 2022 season.

Litchfield 9-11 in 2021 The Blues enjoyed a successful season and could easily keep improving in 2022. Key returning players are Joey Hyde, Jake Jones, Andrew Loch, Cody Klabunde, Dylan Koll, Josh Johnson, Gabe Lecher, Brady Smith and Kal Volinkaty Up and coming players we expect to step up in 2022 would be Avery Liestman, Winky Estrada, Drew Kotzer, Hunter Thiel, Jack Ramthun, Carson Deal and Riley Taber. New Players Eric Hulterstrum, Ryan Quast, Ben Alsleben, Bauer Wahl, Bennett Lecher add some more talent to the Blues roster. The pitching remains a strength and defense appears sound. With a little more consistency up and down the order, the Blues are a definitely a team to watch this year.

Loretto 15-5 in 2021 The Larks lost a few big contributors including the retirement of Eric Schutte, that doesn't mean they should be counted out as they still have Keenan Hodgkin, Bradley Koskie, Tyler Maher, Kent Koch, Nathan Maher, Colton Petron, Ben Leuthner and Josh Gullickson on the roster. Others you may see on the field for the Larks are Jacob Mathiason, Joshua Koskie and Max Hudlow as well as newly signed Caleb Koskie, Stephen Webster, Andrew Kemper and Jack Scanlon. Colton Petron led the team in innings pitched last year, but after that the young pitchers for the Larks will have to pick up more innings this year. The Larks lost some experience and may need to find some team depth among the new and younger players. Still their core players are experienced enough to keep them in contention for the title or as a State tourney representative.



Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard.

Practice doesn't make perfect. Perfect practice makes perfect.



If my uniform doesn't
get dirty,
I haven't done anything
in the baseball game.



Life is a game.
Baseball is serious.

Maple Lake 8-12 in 2021 The Lakers are most successful when their pitchers are healthy which hasn't been the case the last couple of years. They have a very deep staff of proven experienced pitchers. Hunter Malachek, Mitch Wurm, Nick Preisinger, Ben Reilley, Grant Mergan and Gavin Wolff represent solid pitchers with plenty of success on their resumes. The Lakers can also score runs with a line up consisting of a strong veteran core in Luke Fobbe, Riley Decker, Derek Rachel, Donnie Mavenkamp, Matt Bergstrom, Hunter Malechek, Ben Clapp, Jordan Tanner, Ben Goelz, Logan Orazem and Ben Reilly. Maple Lake with a lot of depth and experience and could easily contend for the title if their pitching staff stays healthy.

Maple Plain 7-13 in 2021 The Diamond Devils return a solid group of core players - TJ Carlson, Tommy Traen, Colton Peters, Jake Hartman, Nick Hartman, Logan Kinsel, Calvin Rippberger, David Dorsey and Max Marshall. The top inning eaters last year for Maple Plain were Kyle Bode, Mike Frericks, Lance Reynolds and Max Marshall. Lance has retired and the other three have question marks about how much they can pitch this year. Consequently, the Diamond Devils may be looking for some young arms to step up and contribute on the mound. Look for Maple Plain to hit for average and score some runs. They could use more power in the line up and their record will be determined by their success on the hill.

Montrose 2-18 in 2021 The Stingers won a couple of games in 2021, but couldn't avoid another last place finish. Over the last few years they have lost some promising pitching prospects and until the pitching staff gets stronger, they are likely to be in the bottom part of the standings. They again return Kirby Moynagh, Brady Boddeker, Bill Aamodt Alex Smothers and Andrew Moynagh. Others scheduled to be in the line-up are Bradley Farnick, Aiden Stigman, Jacob Noor and Wyatt Johnson. Added to the roster this year are Nick Zeelmer and Lonnie Milless. The Stingers have traditionally been able to score runs, but again will have to stop opponents from scoring so many if they want to reach their goal of escaping last place.

Rockford - New Team in 2022 The Crows are new to the North Star League for 2022. Zach Nelson, Jacob Kraft, David Shun and Andrew Engebretson bring some town team experience to the team. Todd Haag and Troy Loomis are veterans who will fill in at times. He rest of the roster consists mostly of Rockford graduates from the last couple of years. Jack Hanson, Luke Pepin, Zach Yager, Soren Peterson from the class of 2020, Mike Nelson, Ben Biorn, Ryan Lowe, Connor Schreckenghaust, Levi Broking from the class of 2021, plus Keaton Reed, Alex Altmann, and hopefully a few others. The Crows don't know what to expect in wins and losses, but they do plan to have fun and look forward to their North Star League experience.



**More than any other American sport,
baseball creates the magnetic illusion
that it can almost be understood.**

The best thing about baseball
is there is no homework.

