



WEEK FIVE – REGION PREVIEW

WEEK(END) IN REVIEW

Saturday, August 1

#8 – Dassel Cokato 6

#11 – Cokato 1

#9 – Litchfield 10

#10 – Waverly 5

Sunday, August 2

#8 – Dassel Cokato 3

#9 – Litchfield 1

We predicted that the league playoffs would be competitive and we got something close to it, especially on Sunday. Saturday's games weren't blowouts, but they weren't necessarily close either. Litchfield got on the board earlier against Waverly on Saturday with a 2 spot in the first and continued to add to that total throughout the game for the 10-5 win. The Blues got what they needed out of starter Dylan Koll, as he went 7 strong innings, giving up only 3 runs. At the plate the combination of Litchfield's 8-9-1-2 hitters did the damage as Andrew Loch and Owen Boerma went a combined 5-10 in the 1-2 spots, while Avery Liestmann and Cody Klabunde each drove in 2 runs in the 8-9 spot. Just a few miles away over in Dassel, the Saints relied on Tyler Zweibohmer to get them a 6-1 win the Bike Path Series over crosstown rival Cokato. Zweibohmer threw all 9, giving up only 1 run, and striking out 11 to help Dassel-Cokato move on to Sunday's play in game v. Litchfield.

Sundays game was exactly what we expected. Another pitcher's duel between Jordan Flick and Owen Boerma. The Saints were able to get on the board in the 3rd inning with a two out run that came via a Blues error. They were able to get 2 more in the 4th when Dylan Weber and Jeff Janckila had RBI base hits to go up 3-0. That was more than they needed as Litchfield scored their only run of the game in the 5th on an Andrew Loch RBI single. Flick finished the game throwing 9 innings, giving up 1 run 6 hits, while Boerma threw 7 innings finishing with 9 k's while surrendering 3 runs.

With Litchfield eliminated. The Owen Boerma sweepstakes now begin!!!!

REGION 12C FIRST ROUND PREVIEW

Wednesday, August 5 – 7:30pm

#1-Buffalo Bulldogs (10-0) v. #8-Dassel-Cokato Saints (6-6)

Buffalo ran away with the league going 10-0 and won their only non-league game last week against the always talented Cold Spring Springers. The top of the order for the Bulldogs has been deadly! The combination of Haight, Duske, O'Donnell, and Renshaw gives opposing pitchers minimal room for error. Just saw some news today that Ramon Vega Jr will be headed to the Northwoods League and looks like he will miss region playoffs, he's been hot as of late and could be a blow to that solid lineup. Buffalo has a couple of options on the mound for their game 1 starter as Eric Newman (4-0 2.95 ERA) led the league in wins, yet Mr. Bulldog Jon Euerle

went 2-0 with an ERA of 1.50. D-C on the other hand got back to the regions by pitching well, and playing very solid defense. They will either go with Tyler Zweibohmer (1-1 1.88 ERA) on 3 days rest, or Jordan Flick (2-1 2.67 ERA) on 2 days. He's done this before folks. Win or lose versus the Bulldogs, they are going to be a tough team to beat twice with two of the top pitchers in the league; as well as the addition of Dylan Weber and Jim Althoff, both have been consistent additions to the Saints lineup to go along with Tyler Brandel, and John Hohenstein. The Saints may also have history on their side, as the 2015, 2016, and 2019 #1 seeds in the Region 12C playoffs have gone 0-2.

Thursday, August 6 – 7:30pm

#2-Delano Athletics (8-2) v. #7-Maple Plain Diamond Devils (4-6)

Maple Plain was able to fend off Dassel-Cokato 4-3 last week to lock itself in to regions without playing in league playoffs. The Diamond Devils won their last three games in big part of because of the hitting display Billy Soule and Mike Frericks put on during the final week of season. Max Marshall, and Kyle Bode have been the go to arms for the Diamond Devils in 2020, but don't be surprised if they roll with the always tough Judd McKown in game 1. Delano has relied on their strong lineup through most of the season, Hanson, Paulson, and Hart all finished in the top 10 in the NSL in hitting in 2020, which has helped them overcome some early season lack luster pitching performances. Max Otto went 3-1 with a 4.91 ERA this season, yet Jake Gleason, Matt Arens, Cade Lommel, and Jeremy Maschino have all picked up wins for the Athletics this season. We'll see who they give the ball to game 1.

Friday, August 7 – 6:00pm

#4-Howard Lake Orphans (6-4) v. #5-Maple Lake Lakers (5-5)

A 6pm start time doesn't give the Maple Lake faithful much time to get good and loosened up for a ballgame, but being that they are the host, that gives them all a good excuse to get out of work early on a Friday to get primed for this rivalry game. Howard Lake will no doubt give the ball to Mike Dockendorf (3-1 2.05 ERA) who has looked like himself after some early arm issues. The Orphans also have some guys swinging the bat well in 2020. Stud centerfielder Steve Boger at .438, Brad Bickmann .385, and Jake Gruenhagen .333 give the Orphans some much needed pop in the lineup this year. Maple Lake is an interesting one in this most unique of years. Often times we'll find a couple of their pitchers dominating, and a few hitters in or near the top 10 in batting, but some injuries, and changeover has the Lakers looking much younger this year without those recognizable names. They had rolled out several different pitchers, Grant Mergan being their most consistent in the league going 2-1 4.05 might get the ball in game 1, but we could also see Mitch Wurm who has a few appearances this year get the ball in front of the home crowd on Friday night. Either way, don't count out the Lakers playing at Irish Stadium.

Friday, August 7 – 8:30pm

#3-Hutchinson Huskies (8-2) v. #6 Loretto Larks (5-5)

Once we get to Friday night of the first weekend of regions, the games seem to be tight matchups. Though the Huskies and Larks are separated by 3 games, Loretto has played very well down the stretch. They have gotten some good innings out of Donny Schroeder and Colton Petron. Michael Bohlke may be their wildcard on the hill potentially starting their first or second game. The Larks will need to get some more production out of their young lineup in order to keep pace with Husky bats, but as we have seen in years past, anything can happen in August. Hutchinson will most likely go with VanDeSteeg. Which one? That we don't know. Jeremiah went 3-1 with a 0.90 ERA, however younger brother Dan has been throwing in some big spots for the Huskies enabling them to finish 8-2. Dan along with Matt Piechowski have led the offense this year for Hutchinson hitting .396, and .425 respectively, not to mention Jayden Fleck has been heating up as of late. The Larks will need a good outing to knock off the defending Region 12C Champions.

THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT

Instead of putting together an all-NSL team, I have chosen to pick out some players who I feel have bright futures in the league. Basically, we can look down the list of batting leaders, and pitching leaders to put together an all-league team. We'll wait on that for next year when hopefully we have a 20+ game season. These youngsters may not have cracked the leader board yet, but I feel they are worth keeping an eye on.

Ben Goelz (Maple Lake) Stocky catcher has a lot of pop in his bat, and is already hitting in the middle of the Laker lineup. Looks good behind the plate, and has a great mentor in Matt Bergstrom to help him call games in the NSL.

TJ Carlson (Maple Plain) Starting to become a more recognizable name in the league, not hasn't reached 21 yet. Great arm behind the plate and a talented hitter. Will only get better as his college career continues.

Ty Weiman (Waverly) The youngest of young! Will be senior in high school next year so he is what we would call very green, and wet behind the ears. Loves the game, started heating up at the plate towards the end of the season and will only improve if he chooses baseball post high school.

Tanner Kroells (Delano) It's apparent, I love catchers. Kroells has jumped right in the Athletics lineup and made a huge impact calling games, and athleticism makes him a wall behind the plate. Unlike most catchers, he's one of the faster guys you'll find in the league. A wrestler by trade, needs to move up a few weight classes to add some pop in his bat.

Dan VanDeSteege (Hutchinson) Not only hit .396 this season, which was huge for the Huskies without Wendland, and Kohli in the lineup, but was solid on the mound. A rare two way player being able to beat you in multiple ways at the age of 19.

Sanders Asplin (Cokato) Kernels youngster got some state tournament experience in 2019 and has cemented himself as the leadoff man for the next decade out on Brooks Lake. Asplin can fly in the outfield, and used his speed at the plate to hit .316.

Keenan Hodgkin (Loretto) Has been in the Larks lineup for a few years now, but is still in college. Hodgkin plays a great third base with a rocket arm. Keenan also hits right in the middle of the Larks lineup and is turning in to a league staple. He finished with a .389 average in 2020.

Owen Boerma (Litchfield) A no brainer! Have written about him every week. Led the league with 43 strikeouts in 31 innings with a 0.57 ERA.

Ramon Vega Jr. (Buffalo) The Bulldogs have a handful of young talent I could put on this list, but Ramon who is still in college and has been in the league for a few years now assures me he'll be around for the long haul. Has found a true position in the outfield, with great range, and a top-notch arm. Also hit .341 this season.

Brad Bickmann (Howard Lake) Becoming a recognizable face in the league as he has manned third base for the Orphans since 2018. Had a breakout year in 2020 hitting .385, still very young!

Jack Paulson (Delano) At the age of 20, Paulson finished 4th in hitting, 3rd in hits, and 2nd in homeruns in 2020. Great glove and can play multiple positions in the infield.

JT Weiman (Waverly) Came out of nowhere to finish the season at 1-1 with a 3.38 ERA and a huge win on the road at Howard Lake. If he can continue to improve, the Stingers might just have some pitching to build around.

Ethan Hansen (Buffalo) Split time this summer with the town team and 19U independent team for Buffalo. The high school senior to be has a bright future, and may not be with the Bulldogs for too long once he gets in to college. The rest of the league will appreciate that. Can play multiple positions, is a terror at the plate and has been sharp on the mound for the Bulldogs.

FROM THE ARCHIVES - 1998

The North Star League increased to 13 teams for the 1998 season with the additions of Hutchinson and Litchfield. The league lost Elk River due to lack of funds and players. This is the largest in size the league has ever been. This allowed the league to form into three divisions once again, with four "C" teams making up the West and four "C" teams making up the East. The "C" teams were able to have their own region (Region 11C) with the region being the East, West champs and runners-up. The "B" teams in the league were all grouped together in the Central and were all placed in Section 8 with Hamel.

WEST		EAST		CENTRAL	
Litchfield	12-4	Loretto	7-9	Delano	12-4
Howard Lake	9-7	Albertville	6-10	Dassel-Cokato	11-5
Buffalo	7-9	Maple Plain	6-10	St. Michael	11-5
Kingston	1-15	Monticello	4-12	Maple Lake	10-6
				Hutchinson	8-8

This season's disruption was Northwest Umpires inability to supply umpires for 16 regular season games along with some playoff games and having only one umpire instead of the mandatory two. On a more positive note, Ramon Vega of Buffalo became the fourth player in league history to win the triple crown in his division along with setting new regular season home run record with 11. The 1998 season will go down as a hitter's season with 9 of the 13 teams posting .300 team batting averages at the end of the regular season. In Region 11C playoffs, Litchfield played excellent baseball winning the championship, with Howard Lake finishing as runner-up. In Section 8 Hamel once again was the section champ with Dassel-Cokato finishing as the runner-up. In state tournament Class B action Dassel-Cokato was defeated by Rochester 17-5 in the first round; D-C then defeated Bemidji 8-6 before losing to Chaska 12-1. In Class C competition, Howard Lake was defeated by Watkins 4-1 and Litchfield defeated the Cold Spring Rockies 4-1 in the first round. Litchfield then defeated Princeton 4-3 in round two before losing a hard fought 9-8 game to Richmond. Ace right hander Rod Schroeder of Litchfield was named to the Class C All Tournament Team.