

The North Star League

# Spectator

Swingin' in the Rain edition

54th Year

## North Star Standings

### West

	W	L	GB
Howard Lake	5	2	--
Monticello	4	2	.5
Buffalo	2	3	2
Kingston	0	8	5.5

### Central

	W	L	GB
Dassel-Cokato	4	0	--
St. Michael	4	1	.5
Maple Lake	4	3	1.5
Delano	3	3	2
Hutchinson	1	2	2.5

### East

	W	L	GB
Loretto	3	1	--
Maple Plain	4	2	--
Mound	3	2	.5
Albertville	3	5	2
Rockford	1	7	4

### Lakers not missing a beat

## Maple Lake under new management

The rumblings that Maple Lake manager Gary Porter was thinking about hanging it up began a couple years ago. Not that anyone could begrudge him; almost 3 decades in the saddle is bound to leave a guy a little sore. Porter led the Lakers to decades of excellence and was a vocal, recognizable fixture in the third-base coaching box. In many ways, he *was* Maple Lake baseball.

Which left a bit of a dilemma, really. With no successor waiting in the wings, what would come of the Lakers once Gary Porter retired? Would they fizzle out? Even worse, would they disband altogether?

Fortunately for all NSL baseball fans, two guys who've worn the black & gold once or twice saw to it that neither possibility came to pass. When the team learned that Porter was stepping down, several current players approached recently retired Laker Joe Hofman if he'd consider managing the team. Hofman discussed it with outfielder Tony Wurm, and they decided to team up and lead the Lakers together this year. Hofman has managed the Maple Lake Legion team in the past, so he's not exactly a rookie skipper. In fact, several of the current Lakers called him "Coach" during their Legion days.

"Ports left some big shoes to fill," Hofman said this week. "He put in 28 years as the Lakers' manager and player, and he had plenty of success along the way. Replacing somebody with that tenure isn't easy. But it's exciting to be able to continue the Laker

tradition."

Of course, some of the recent Laker traditions are ones the new management would be more than happy to do away with. In recent years, the team has had a way of getting off to a great start but losing its sizzle down the stretch, when the schedule becomes one divisional opponent lined up after the next. With those late-season fades fresh on their memory, the Laker managers decided to schedule fewer early-season games and save some gas for the pennant race. "That will allow us to stay fresh and be playing our best ball in

late July," Hofman stated.

The Lakers' pitching staff is certainly doing its part. Long seen as second banana behind their potent offense, Maple Lake's pitchers

have carried the team so far (see graphic). Staff depth often determines playoff success, so this is a great sign. Oddly, it's the Lakers' offense that hasn't gotten off the schnide—"Our bats haven't come alive yet," Hofman admitted—but league rivals know their lineup is too good for this slump to continue.

You want tradition? Maple Lake is one of the original six members of the North Star League. Thanks in part to Joe Hofman and Tony Wurm, the Lakers will continue adding to their long winning tradition.

### Party of Five

Laker rotation's performances so far

Date	Pitcher	Opp.	IP	H	ER
5/16	Anderson	MP	5	7	2
5/26	DesMarais	Alb.	5.7	7	3
6/2	Klingelhofer	Mon.	7.3	9	1
6/4	Fobbe	HL	10	4	0
6/6	Fuller	StM.	7	6	2

## Gagnon takes retirement in stride

Quietly but resolutely, one of the North Star League's all-time best hitters has hung up his spikes.

Howard Lake's Mike Gagnon, who holds the league record for batting titles, decided at the end of last season to call it a career and focus solely on managing the Orphans.

"It was actually an easy decision,"

Gagnon admitted. "By the end of last year, I realized I wasn't helping the team a whole lot. And if you're a manager and still playing, you'd better be helping your team."

The numbers supported his decision. Gagnon, whose yearly batting averages routinely fell in the upper .300s and lower .400s, didn't finish above .300 for the first time in memory. Not that he's exactly suffering for the decision.

"I've been having a lot of fun watching," he said. "The biggest difference is my ability to communicate more with my players during a game. You don't realize it when you're playing so much,

but now I can see times where I might not have been giving my players all [the leadership] they could have used."

We'll miss seeing one of the league's true class acts spraying hits all over the field, but we'll enjoy watching him manage the team he helped re-establish for years to come.

### This Polecat doesn't stink

Coming into this season, Monticello was looking for a few good arms. Looks like it found a great one.

Matt Loegering, a Big Lake product and Minnesota State-Mankato pitcher, has gotten off to a torrid start in NSL play. Monti's new ace blazed through his first three outings with a 3-0 record, a ridiculous 0.50 ERA (one earned run in 18 innings) and averaging more than a strikeout an inning. This is a rookie?

Loegering fell somewhat back to earth on Wednesday night against D-C, giving up 3 earned runs in 7 innings pitched, but he remains the main reason Monticello has kept pace with Howard Lake in the West.

## Loretto sets the early pace

Coming into this season, Loretto wanted to win more games than it did last year and beat out Maple Plain for the division title. Thanks to a quick start, the Larks are already almost halfway to their first goal...which bodes well as they try to reach their second goal.

Buoyed by a season-opening 5-3 upset of Maple Lake, Loretto boasts a 3-1 record and some gaudy hitting stats. "We've been hitting the ball pretty well," manager Herb Koch said. "Timely hitting—Ben Scanlon and Tom Traen have had a couple of big hits. Nick [Koch]'s been pitching pretty well, too."

They'll need to continue that sort

of output if they expect to remain stride-for-stride with the rival Diamond Devils. Koch remarked, "We've been successful with them, but it's always a close game. Most of our games lately have been decided by one run; it just depends on who comes up with the big hit. It'll be a battle when we play them."

### Eight RBIs for Gregg

Maple Plain's Adam Gregg might be the free-agent signing of the year. The newcomer has led the Diamond Devils both on the mound and at the plate, but never more than Wednesday night against Delano. Gregg had a run-scoring double, a 3-run HR, and a grand slam. That's a season for some players!

## Delano starts fast, falls back

For the past few years, the Delano Athletics have played the role of play-off spoiler in the Class B North Star Central. It's a role they played quite well two years ago, when they racked up a pile of upsets en route to a berth at state. This year, they got off to the kind of start that looked like they were ready to contend. The A's rolled off three quick wins to stake the early lead in the division.

This past week, though,

was a forgettable one, as three consecutive losses brought them back to the pack. The first of those losses was especially tough. Delano had division leader D-C on the ropes, down 2-0 in the bottom of the 8th, but the Saints scored 3 runs to eke out a 3-2 win.

Delano ace Jeff Janzen is off to an even better start than usual, racking up a 3-1 record with an ERA of 0.93. The big question is, how much of that load can Janzen shoulder? Fortunately, Aaron Swenson and Matt Griebel have shown promise. Their continued success is the key to making sure Janzen's golden arm doesn't turn to tin in July.

D-C and St. Michael are off to their usual solid starts. The only real surprise so far in the Central is Hutchinson. The erratic Huskies, last season's upstart team, beat New Ulm and Litchfield but lost to Albertville and nearly fell to Kingston. As the Huskies know, they can't afford any more hiccups if they want to keep up in the Central.

### Trivial matters

What is the only team to have been a member of the North Star League every year since the league was formed?

See p. 4

Roundup  
**West**

Roundup  
**Central**

Roundup  
**East**

## around the horn

### Lots of rain checks

The winning formula for the Boston Braves in the '40s was "Spahn and Sain and two days of rain." This year's NSL season has given fans half of that equation; unfortunately, there's been no sign of Warren Spahn or Johnny Sain.

So far this season, 13 North Star games have been rained out. Most of those rainouts can be traced to two consecutive Sunday downpours. Nobody at league headquarters can recall two straight Sundays being rained out. In fact, NSL officials even checked with Don Gutzke, a league weather expert and current hobby farmer, and he didn't recall being rained out two Sundays in a row, either.

### Pitchers are way, way ahead in the count

Pitching has come in plentiful supply this year, with half of the league's 14 teams sporting a team ERA of under 2.00! On the flip side, eight squads have team batting averages under .220, four of them below .200. Taking all teams into account, the league ERA is 3.89, and the league batting

average is .244.

Part of this low ERA, of course, is due to the number of clanks we've been hearing across the league. Lots of early-season fielding errors have led to unearned runs by the bunches. The best example of this came Wednesday night at Delano, where Maple Plain trounced the Athletics 11-0. Rough night on the ol' stat sheet for Delano pitching, right? Not so, sushi chef. Out of the 11 runs scored by Maple Plain, *only one* of them was earned.

### Check the softball fields

Estimated population of Hutchinson: 13,403.

Estimated population of Monticello: 8,839.

Yet neither town could produce nine baseball players for their game on May 2. Larger towns tend to have a tougher time rounding up ballplayers in part because of the greater diversions available. All the same, it's too bad when the NSL's two largest cities have to call off their game due to a lack of players.

## Harby predicts upsets for Maple Plain, St. Michael

North Star League sage Harby Dicks knows all and sees all. Here's how Harby the Greek sees the upcoming week in league action.

### Sunday June 13<sup>th</sup>

#### Monticello 9, Albertville 1

Albertville pitching will throw gas on fire-breathing Monti hitting attack. We hear Monti's team batting average is only .335, but they should be able to score enough runs to win.

#### Mound 5, Maple Plain 3

Mound always plays Maple Plain tough. I see no change here. Errors always plague MP when they play Mound. Don't try so hard to win, MP.

#### D-C 2, Maple Lake 0

DC's pitching has been throwing goose eggs but neither team hitting well. Should be low scoring.

#### Delano 6, Loretto 2

Delano and Loretto had been on fire until last weekend. Frank Muckenhirn day in Delano will re-light the A's. Ace pitcher Jeff Janzen of Delano is hotter than &^%\$.

#### Buffalo 7, Kingston 3

Buffalo has proved they can hit, but which team will have their pitching staff show up will decide the game.

#### St Michael 8, Hutchinson 4

St Michael seems to be picking up from where they left off from last season. Hutch has been the league's mystery team? Not sure which one will show up.

### Wednesday June 16

#### Buffalo 9, Delano 8

After Sunday's games, neither team will have their ace pitcher. This will lead

to high-scoring, entertaining game.

Buffalo has been known to win these types of games.

#### Maple Lake 10, Rockford 0 7 inn

Rockford playing good baseball but lack hitting in the worst way!!!

#### Loretto 7, St Michael 6

Loretto always plays St Michael tough. Loretto will hit St Michael pitching in this one.

#### Hutchinson 5, Mound 3

The long drive from Mound to Hutchinson will way heavily on Mound hitters. Hutch should get winning streak going with this game.

#### D-C 8, Kingston 2

DC pitching should handle Kingston hitting, but look out for home run hitting Brian Dietz.

# North Star statistics, through June 6

## North Star East

### BATTING LEADERS

NAME	AB	R	H	AVG.
T Klaers Alb	19	3	12	.632
P Sycks Md	12	1	6	.600
M Goodwald MP	10	5	6	.600
Br Scanlon Lor	14	7	8	.571
S Mauricio Roc	25	5	12	.480
T Traen Lor	16	6	7	.438
A Gregg MP	19	6	8	.421
B Schliinz MP	15	4	6	.400
Bn Scanlon Lor	15	7	6	.400
D Engebretson Roc	21	1	8	.381
E Schutte Lor	19	2	7	.368
Co Hawkinson MP	14	2	5	.357
A Engebretson MP	17	3	6	.353
P Harrell Md	12	1	4	.333
I Keen Roc	18	0	6	.333
M Johnson Alb	27	5	9	.333
Jn Schutte Lor	12	3	4	.333
P Schumacher Alb	10	1	3	.300

### 2B Leaders

Bn Scanlon Lor	3
B Schliinz MP	3
A Gregg MP	3

### 3B Leaders

5 tied at	1
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### HR Leaders

S Mauricio Roc	1
E Schutte Lor	1

### RBI Leaders

S Mauricio Roc	6
A Engbretson MP	6

### GWRBI Leader

Cr Hawkinson MP	2
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### TEAM PITCHING LEADERS

NAME	IP	W	L	SO	ERA
P McPherson MP	20	1	1	9	1.35
J Utech Md	10	1	0	5	2.70
N Koch Lor	25	3	1	18	2.45
P Schumacher Alb	21	2	1	12	3.43
S Mauricio Roc	18	1	2	17	6.50

## North Star Central

### BATTING LEADERS

NAME	AB	R	H	AVG.
B Pokornowski DC	12	2	7	.583
J Olson Del	14	4	8	.571
D Falde Del	18	5	10	.556
J Schwarze Hut	13	2	6	.462
M Peterson Del	18	3	7	.389
C Volkman St M	13	6	5	.385
N Johnson ML	24	5	9	.375
K Jaunich Del	16	8	6	.375
B Muckenhirn Del	16	2	6	.375
J Lucht Del	10	1	4	.364
T Fuller ML	25	2	9	.360
B Kneefe St M	14	3	5	.357
J Janzen Del	21	4	7	.333
K Jerpseth ML	24	4	8	.333
B Opsahl DC	12	5	4	.333
T Thode Hut	13	0	4	.308
M Marquardt Hut	10	0	3	.300

### 2B Leader

J Schwarze Hut	3
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### 3B Leader

B Opsahl DC	1
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### HR Leader

C Raiche ML	2
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### RBI Leader

B Pokornowski DC	6
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### GWRBI Leader

T Fuller ML	2
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### TEAM PITCHING LEADERS

NAME	IP	W	L	SO	ERA
J Janzen Del	29	3	1	22	0.93
D Birkholz DC	17	2	0	20	1.06
A Padnos Hut	8	0	1	6	2.25
T DesMarais ML	18	1	1	7	2.55
P Schumm St M	16	1	1	15	2.87

## North Star West

### BATTING LEADERS

NAME	AB	R	HAVE.
G Holker Mon	19	5	13 .684
N Hill Buf	10	1	5 .500
E Schreifels Mon	23	4	10 .435
J Berg HL	21	6	9 .429
J Van Culin Mon	25	5	9 .360
S Isaacson Kin	25	1	9 .360
K Kraska Mon	23	4	7 .304
K Melville Mon	10	2	3 .300

### 2B Leaders

K Werner HL	2
N Lee Mon	2
E Schreifels Mon	2

### 3B Leader

K Kraska Mon	1
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### HR Leader

B Dietz Kin	2
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### RBI Leaders

J Van Culin Mon	6
B Dietz Kin	5

### GWRBI Leaders

10 tied at	1
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### TEAM PITCHING LEADERS

NAME	IP	W	L	SO	ERA
M Loegering Mon	26	3	0	23	0.35
J Streich HL	23	1	0	17	1.17
B Grochow Kin	18	0	1	12	2.45
E Krause Buf	9	0	0	6	4.65

## Trivial matters

The Delano Athletics are the only charter members of the North Star League (then the Wright Star) to have played in the league every year since 1951.