

The North Star League

Spectator

Stranded at Third edition

53rd Year

North Star Standings

West

	W	L	GB
Howard Lake	5	2	--
Kingston	4	4	1.5
Buffalo	3	4	2
Rockford	2	7	4

Central

	W	L	GB
Maple Lake	6	0	--
Dassel-Cokato	4	1	1.5
St. Michael	4	4	3
Hutchinson	3	3	3
Delano	1	5	5

East

	W	L	GB
Monticello	6	1	--
Maple Plain	5	5	2.5
Albertville	4	5	3
Loretto	4	6	3.5
Mound	2	5	4

River Bandits are for real

Rookies respectable in Rockford

Startup town teams are a mixed bag. Their only common thread is a tendency to lose games by the bushel—that's about where the similarities end. Some come in well-organized and humble, with a reliable core of regulars. Other teams come in as Wayzata.

Thankfully for the league, the upstarts in Rockford bear little resemblance to their Wayzatan forebears. In their rookie season, the Rockford River Bandits are forging a reputation around the league as a respectable new team in the North Star West. They aren't winning a ton of games yet, but they aren't embarrassing themselves, either.

"Everyone says Rockford's competitive," said River Bandits manager Ryan Rassat. "That's all you can ask for in your first year. We've lost a couple of tight games; otherwise, we'd have a pretty good record. I mean, everyone's still getting to know everyone else."

How does a team like Rockford's come about? In their case, not unlike a good garage band: a group of guys getting together because they want to play. Rassat, his brother Jimmy, and friend Niles Lewin had an itch to play town-team ball and also to put a team in Rockford (last in the NSL in 1977). Lewin was no stranger to the league, having been removed from the Mound squad last year. Pretty soon, 10 guys were on board—including the Rassats' cousin, Clint Morrissette, late of Delano.

The River Bandits' arrival in the NSL was part good organization, part good timing. Litchfield's departure had left a gap among the Class C teams that needed to be filled; three-team divisions are taboo according to the state board. That's not to say Rassat didn't make a pretty good case on his own. He came to the league and proved he had a sizable roster (and wasn't scavenging from other nearby teams) as well as sufficient funding. Rockford, welcome to the North Star League.

Some of the River Bandits' best players showed up after the team ran an ad in the Rockford Leader. They included OF/P Scott Mauricio, who lived just down the block from Rassat and was ready to play ball after five years off, and Ben Fontana, a Rockford HS product playing at SCSU. "To tell you the truth," Rassat said, "our 1-5 hitters are as good as any other C team. For a first-year team, I'm really happy with where we are."

"Where we are" remains a bit of an issue, however. After initially receiving an enthusiastic thumbs-up to play at the RHS field, they were later turned away due to the possibility of alcohol and tobacco on school grounds. So the River Bandits, much like the old Howard Lake teams (hence the name "Orphans") have no field to call their home. That may change next year, pending new arrangements with the school. One way or the other, Rockford has a solid new home in the North Star League.

No Sosas here!

We're a cork-free league...but are players adjusting to wood bats?

	2002	2003 (so far)
League batting average	.260	.281
League triples	18	16
League home runs	42	23
Teams hitting over .300	1	4
League ERA	3.53	4.28

League report

Divisions bunched through opening month

Nobody was surprised to see the favorites in the two Class C divisions, Monticello and Howard Lake, break out to their early leads. Monti's 2.5-game lead in the East already looks insurmountable, and the Orphans' pitching renders them mostly crash-proof. Neither team is perfect—Howard Lake's lineup in particular needs a boomer or two—but both have great talent. They may be on a playoff collision course that didn't quite materialize last year....

Fundamental flaws

Paging Dr. Strange-glove

Achilles lives and breathes, leaving his heels all over the North Star League. Certain teams have committed some serious fundamental no-nos so far, and their records reflect it.

Albertville's defense has smelled rather offensive at times. The six unearned runs the Villains yielded in a 13-1 loss to Monticello made little difference, but their seven errors against Hutchinson on Wednesday did. Pitcher Paul Schumacher aged 20 years on the mound as his defense repeatedly miss cutoffs and kicked away an upset bid.

If a team scored every time it touched a base, Rockford would have a pretty decent record. Unfortunately, the only record it's on track for is the stranded-runners record. In a 2-1 loss to Maple Plain, the River Bandits left an even dozen men on base. They came back three days later and topped it, stranding 13 in a 5-0 loss to Loretto. Rockford left the bases loaded twice—and runners at second and third three times.

Mighty St. Michael? Five unearned runs in a 6-5 loss to newfound rival Albertville. Eight errors in the Rockford debacle.

Mound? Seven unearned runs in the ninth inning of a 10-5 loss to Loretto. Fifteen men left on base in a loss to Kingston.

Finally, Hutchinson, fresh off a state appearance in '02, has looked klutzy in the field as well. It earned a 6-4 loss to Howard Lake on May 25 by committing eight errors. None of the five runs Jim Farenbaugh gave up that day were earned.

Two pitchers in the East have looked particularly sharp this summer. While Albertville's Paul Schumacher is the acknowledged top hurler in the division, Maple Plain's Pat McPherson and Loretto's Nick Koch have led their teams with impressive performances as well. McPherson, known to this point as an innings-eater but not exactly an ace, has filled the Diamond Devils' void left by the departed Josh Jacobson. He has two complete games under his belt already, highlighted by a where'd-that-come-from one-hit shutout at Buffalo. McPherson also shut powerful Monticello down on one hit for the first five innings.

Koch, for his part, already has three complete-game victories and is only getting stronger. He gave up just one earned run with seven strikeouts against Hutch on June 4, then shut out Rockford a week later....

Mound finally caught a break! The Mallards, one of the NSL's more snakebit teams, captured some late-inning magic of its own. Against Delano on May 28, Mound squandered a 3-1 ninth-inning lead by giving up two runs to the A's. In the bottom of the 9th, Brian Prehm was hit by

a pitch, stole second, and advance to third on a wild pitch. One walk later, Delano pitcher Jeff Janzen attempted a pickoff and was called for a balk. Prehm trotted home to seal the 4-3 win, and Delano's season of misery continued....

Kingston is finally reaping the benefits of players sticking around for a few years. Buffalo may have inexplicably forfeited to them, but the Kings' victories over Loretto and Mound show they can win the games they need to win. Now it's time to pull some bona fide upsets....

In the Central, Maple Lake and D-C are raking right now and creating some distance from St. Michael and Hutch. Eight of the division's top nine hitters wear Lakers or D-C uniforms, and only D-C's close loss to Monticello keeps both squads from being unbeaten. The two teams square off June 27 and July 6....

Can St. Michael turn things around? The Saints just reeled off a three-game losing streak, unheard-of since '92. There are a lot of new faces in the St. Michael dugout. They won't stay down forever, but now may be your best chance to beat the Saints....

around the horn

Back in my day... the ball didn't come back

Until this year, Delano's Dave Jaunich had been out of town-team baseball since the early '90s. But even a decade of perfect attendance couldn't have prepared him for what happened on June 1.

Loretto has a gem of a ballpark, though it's flanked by softball diamonds as part of a larger athletic complex. During Delano's visit to Loretto that day, Jaunich blasted a laser shot that cleared the left-field fence. Except—welcome back!—the ball bounced off the softball fence and back into play. Jaunich's marvelous home run turned into a spectacular double, and Delano never recovered. Loretto won the game, 5-2.

Box score line of the issue

D-C's 27-3 win over Kingston on May

26 supplied a season's worth of superlatives. The Kings came in, chests puffed out as division leaders, but the Saints established good ol' fashioned order in dispatching the hosts. D-C scored 14 runs in the first inning before an out was recorded and held a cozy 24-0 lead in the fourth. Several Saints went bonkers, but Brent Pokornowski went most bonkers of all: one HR, five hits, five runs, and six RBI.

Correction + retraction = contraction

The April 28 issue of the *Spectator* reported that Litchfield's Greg Johnson attended last September's league meeting. Rube Nathe was Litchfield's sole representative at that meeting. The *Spectator* regrets this error.

North Star statistics, through June 11

North Star East

North Star Central

North Star West

BATTING LEADERS

NAME	AB	R	H	AVG.
B Valerius Alb	24	5	12	.500
J Scherber Alb	18	0	9	.500
Br Scanlon Lor	44	12	20	.455
J Jacobson Md	25	3	11	.440
B Preham Md	15	4	6	.400
A Van Culin Mon	33	9	13	.394
Bn Scanlon Lor	37	2	14	.378
G Holker Mon	19	3	7	.368
A Snyder Md	30	7	11	.367
J Wood MP	25	1	9	.360
E Schutte Lor	42	10	14	.333
T Klaers Alb	32	3	10	.313
J Holthaus Mon	23	6	7	.304
J Anderson Md	20	3	6	.300

2B Leader

S McLaughlin Alb.....4

3B Leader

E Schutte Lor.....2

HR Leaders

V Reuter MP.....1
 E Schutte Lor.....1
 J Spurzem Lor.....1
 A Schutte Lor.....1

RBI Leaders

Bn Scanlon Lor.....10
 Br Scanlon Lor.....10

GWRBI Leader

17 tied at 1

TEAM PITCHER LEADERS

NAME	IP	W	L	SO	ERA
P Schumacher, Alb	34	2	2	22	1.82
J Van Culin, Mon	19	1	0	13	1.86
P McPherson, MP	32	1	2	13	2.53
J Jacobson, Md	26	0	2	26	2.70
N Koch, Lor	51	3	2	25	3.18

BATTING LEADERS

NAME	AB	R	H	AVG.
M Bergstrom DC	17	13	10	.588
B Pokornowski DC	21	10	12	.571
K Jerpseth ML	19	7	10	.526
B Opsahl DC	22	9	10	.455
P Burkstrand DC	20	6	9	.450
D VanDehey ML	20	6	9	.450
E Pokornowski DC	20	4	9	.450
C Volkmann StM	36	5	16	.444
T Wurm ML	18	2	8	.444
B Keefe StM	33	9	14	.424
J Barbeln StM	37	7	15	.405
C Henke Hut	20	4	8	.400
M Peterson Del	23	2	9	.391
B Fobbe ML	16	3	6	.375

2B Leaders

C Henke Hut.....4
 B Keefe StM.....4
 J Barbeln StM.....4

3B Leader

C Volkman StM.....2

HR Leader

K Jerpseth ML.....3

RBI Leaders

P Burkstrand DC.....10
 C Volkmann StM.....10

GWRBI Leaders

K Jerpseth ML.....2
 J Barbeln StM.....2

TEAM PITCHING LEADERS

NAME	IP	W	L	SO	ERA
T Johnson DC	18	3	0	27	0.50
D Brant StM	17	1	1	17	0.52
J Farenbaugh Hut	24	1	2	10	2.40
R Klingelhoffer ML	21	2	0	12	2.57
J Janzen Del	31	0	3	26	3.19

BATTING LEADERS

NAME	AB	R	H	AVG.
T Morgan Kin	17	5	9	.529
C Burau HL	21	6	10	.476
A Gagnon HL	17	5	7	.412
B Geelan Buf	20	2	8	.400
T Dahl Kin	15	5	6	.400
K Evenski Kin	15	2	6	.400
B Dietz Kin	26	2	9	.346
S Mauricio Roc	35	7	12	.343
R Rassatt Roc	30	3	10	.333
B Borrell HL	27	7	9	.333
S Isaacson Kin	24	8	8	.333
R Olson Buf	15	2	5	.333
B Fontana Roc	34	4	11	.324
M Holman Buf	22	5	7	.318
N Lewin Roc	33	5	10	.303
E Cox Buf	20	4	6	.300

2B Leaders

B Borrell HL.....3
 C Burau HL.....3

3B Leaders

E Cox Buf.....1
 N Lewin Roc.....1
 C Burau HL.....1

HR Leader

T Dahl Kin.....3

RBI Leader

T Dahl Kin.....10

GWRBI Leader

B Borrell.....3

TEAM PITCHING LEADERS

NAME	IP	W	L	SO	ERA
A Demaris Buf	29	3	1	24	2.17
S Heber HL	23	1	1	17	2.74
S Mauricio Roc	28	1	3	25	3.45
B Paulson Kin	16	1	2	10	4.32