

The North Star League

# Spectator

55th Year

## North Star Standings

### West

	W	L	GB
Monticello	7	1	--
Howard Lake	8	4	1
Buffalo	2	8	6
Kingston	1	7	6

### Central

	W	L	GB
Maple Lake	9	2	--
Delano	7	3	1.5
Hutchinson	6	5	3
Dassel-Cokato	6	5	3
Hutchinson	5	5	3.5

### East

	W	L	GB
Maple Plain	9	3	--
Loretto	5	3	2
Albertville	3	7	5
Rockford	2	9	6.5
Mound	1	8	6.5

### Pitchforks and pitchers

## Maple Plain makes its move

During the first month of the season, a lot of talk around the North Star League centered on unbeaten Monticello. The potent Polecats had every bit the look of a state contender—certainly the class of Class C in the NSL.

Until Maple Plain lowered the boom.

The plucky Diamond Devils just finished the most impressive fortnight of any team this season as they unloaded on Monticello, routed division rival Loretto, shut out Maple Lake, and 10-runned Hutchinson.

“The bats kind of came alive,” said manager John Timpe, which is a bit like saying the Americans “kind of came alive” after Pearl Harbor. His team scored 10 runs against Monti and 12 against Loretto, rapping as many doubles in the Monticello game as their opponents had hits.

Their 10-1 victory over the host Polecats is what got the league to sit up and take notice. Maple Plain scored one in the first and just kept piling on, tallying runs in six different innings. Matt Goodwald and Andrew Engebretson both had four hits to lead the offense, and Pat McPherson went eight solid innings to get the win.

“McPherson tends to do well against Monticello,” Timpe said. “Those guys were hitting the ball hard, but they stayed in the park. I know if we play [Monti] again, we won’t beat them like we did last week.”

It would be one thing if McPherson were the Devils’ only pitcher putting up Ws, but Maple Plain has eight players who know how to throw the ball. As nice as it was that the bats woke up, the pitchers are the real strength of this team.

Against Loretto, Maple Plain got an inspired victory from C.J. Goodwald.

Goodwald had graduated from high school just a week earlier but started his summer internship with a bang. He went 8 innings and whiffed 10 Larks hitters en route to a 12-1 Devils victory. KC Johnson’s ninth-inning grand slam ended the scoring as well as any doubt about Maple Plain being the beast of the East.

Goodwald’s postgrad work continued Wednesday night against Hutchinson, when he slammed the Class B power in an 11-1 win. Once again, Goodwald gave up just one earned run in 8 innings of work.

Ten paragraphs in, and we have yet to mention staff ace Adam Gregg. (These days, he can share the title.) Gregg outdueled Maple Lake’s Bob Fobbe in a 2-0 win on June 19. That pushed Gregg’s record to 5-0 with a microscopic ERA of 0.32. Amazingly enough, Gregg is doing all this with a torn labrum in his pitching shoulder. “He’s had it for two years,” Timpe noted. “He gets loose, and we just let him go until he’s done. He’s seen some doctors, but between exercise and some aspirin or something, once a week is fine.”

Although Loretto’s putting together a respectable campaign of its own, the Eastern division is Maple Plain and everyone else. It’s a young team that sticks together and just keeps getting better. Even their three losses came before everyone was back from school. Plus, they’re hungry: they feel they beat themselves in the second round of last year’s state tourney, and they don’t want to fumble another chance.

Timpe says: “We’ve got a good attitude this year. More confidence, too. If nobody gets hurt and we can get through regions...who knows?”

## around the horn

### All-Star Game next Friday at Howard Lake

The stars will be out next Friday, July 1, for the North Star League All-Star Game at Howard Lake. The game is slated for 7:00.

All NSL teams will be represented as the North and the South continue their bitter once-a-year rivalry. An added bonus will be the chance to sit in Memorial Park's new bleachers, which are actually "old" seats purchased from the Baltimore Orioles organization. These seats are originals from Oriole Park at Camden Yards that were

replaced during this past offseason. They're comfortable, they're one-of-a-kind, and they're yours if you get there early enough.



### Maple Plain calling all alumni for old-timers' game

Baseball has been played in Maple Plain since 1922. To commemorate this tradition, the Diamond Devils are holding an old-timers' game on July 17 at 1:00, an hour before the Devils square off against Loretto.

Anyone who has ever worn the Maple Plain uniform is encouraged to join the fun. If you are interested in playing, please contact John Timpe at (763) 479-1603.

## Five minutes with...

### Ed Cox

#### Shortstop, Buffalo Bulldogs

##### How long have you played in the league?

I have been in the league since Hutch joined which I think was in 1999. I played for Hutch from 1996 - 2001, in the Ara Wilson League and then the North Star League. I have been with Buffalo since becoming a teacher in town in 2002.

##### Was it difficult to leave Hutch?

It was very difficult to leave Hutch because we had a nice core of players that came from a number of age groups. It was fun to play with guys that my Dad had played with, guys that were a few years older than me that I had looked up to and guys that were my age that I had grown up playing with. I have strong roots in Hutch baseball having been a batboy for the team when I was younger. But, I think it is very important to play in the town you work, especially if you are a coach and a member of a growing baseball program.

I definitely miss playing with guys like Kyle Meissner, Chris Henke, Dave Schaefer, Mike Marquardt, Mark Lickfelt and many more. I learned more about playing baseball with all those guys of varied backgrounds than any other experience I have had. And, Lee Kuhl is such a knowledgeable baseball guy that you learn so much just listening to what he has to say.

##### What was it like being part of a brand-new team just getting organized?

It was exciting from the start. Jason [Opsal] has worked very hard to get this team going. It was interesting to see what guys coming through the baseball program thought amateur baseball was like. I think there were a number of guys that have come and gone that were surprised by how competitive and at what level the game is played at. But, we are working on developing our core of players and trying to improve. Soon, we are going to have guys entering their mid-twenties when they will start to figure how to hit at this level and be competitive even when they may be overmatched - but we are not there yet.

**Buffalo is one of the largest towns in the league. What will it**

##### take to bring the Bulldogs to the next level?

If you look around the league, I think size of town has very little to do with quality of team. Buffalo has gone through some growing pains in their youth levels in the last 5-10 years, but I think we are starting to develop a more competitive player from our youth programs. But, if you look at Buffalo's history, when they were really good in the 80's and early 90's they had a mix of players from town and those from out of town. Now, we are primarily players that are BHS graduates. I don't know if that is going to make us a perennial power in the league, but I think there is something to be said for having Buffalo residents and Buffalo kids on a Buffalo town team. Another thing that really holds us back is the facility. It is hard to get kids excited about playing baseball when you don't have a facility that attracts them when they are young. We are working hard to improve the playing surface, but there is only so much we can do when the space is so tight. (Not to sound like the Twins too much - but I understand!)

##### What has been your favorite memory in NSL baseball so far?

Besides the obvious of seeing Buffalo have a growing amateur team that has been fairly competitive early in our re-formation, I would have to say playing my second to last year in Hutch. It was the last year that we had a lot of the guys that I started playing playing amateur baseball with. I really felt we were just stacked with Nate Brown, Dave Schaefer, Nate Brinkman, Mike Kobow, Jim Farenbaugh, Mike Marquardt, Dennis Piechowski, Tim Johnson, Mark Lickfelt, Kyle Messner, Dale Eng and more. But, we were knocked out by DC to go to state. That is one thing that I was bummed to miss out on, when Hutch went to state, that would have been fun - but who knows, they probably wouldn't have gone if I was there...

##### If you could play for one other team or manager in the league, who would you choose, and why?

Again, besides going back to play for Hutch, I think it would be fun to play for Maple Lake or Howard Lake. Howard Lake plays the game the right way and I think Mike Gagnon is a stand-up guy, who I have a lot of respect for. Maple Lake would be fun because I live in town there and the park is beautiful. It would be fun to be a guy who can pretty much just show up and play, rake your base, and go home. Also, I really enjoyed the B division where those are the guys you are playing against to go to state. I remember really getting up to play our B games.

But, I love being a part of the Buffalo baseball program and helping with its growth. Hopefully in a few years, I can just show up, throw my one or two innings and not have to worry about all the other stuff.

**Kings for a day**

# Kingston wins, falls short of historic streak

People usually enjoy seeing history made, but this was one bit of history nobody wanted to witness. Except the Rockford River Bandits, perhaps.

In the last issue of the Spectator, we reported that the Kingston Kings had racked up 21 consecutive losses, just five short of tying the league record. Since then, Kingston fell to Monticello 13-2 and then to Albertville in an agonizing 9-8 contest. It was just their latest in a series of hard-luck losses this year, but it got people wondering if fate had it in for these poor Kings.

And then fate handed them a date with the Rockford River Bandits.

“You never want to underestimate an opponent,” said Kings manager Seth Isaacson, “but yeah, there are always games where you have to make the most of the opposition.”

With all due respect to an improving Rockford club, Kingston needed to make the most of this opponent because (pending

a rain reschedule with Buffalo) the Kings’ next three opponents were the veritable murderer’s row of Maple Lake, Monticello, and Maple Plain. Though they might not have realized it at the time, a Kings loss to Rockford would have just about confirmed their reservation at the heartbreak hotel.

This past Sunday, the Kings broke out to a 3-0 lead in the third inning and added four more runs in the fourth. Rockford scratched across for a run in the bottom of the fourth and another in the fifth, but that was the closest they would get. The Kings, behind the solid complete-game pitching of Brad Paulson (11 hits, 2 ER, 0 BB, 8 Ks), had beaten both the River Bandits and the monkey off their backs. The Loretto Larks of yesteryear would retain possession of the record.

“Man, it was nice to finally get over the hump,” Isaacson admitted. “We’ve played so well this year—I mean, we’ve had three

one-run losses—that it was about time we finally broke through.”

Indeed, this Kingston product is better than last year’s by a long shot. They hung onto most of their key players from last year, added Nick Forga at second base, and brought Billy Aho back to the outfield to anchor probably their strongest outfield ever. The continuity has shown on defense, too, where the Kings are making far fewer mistakes than they’ve made in years past.

“It was really frustrating to come out so flat against Albertville, and yet we still scored eight runs,” Isaacson said. “We’ve played so well against the best teams—we out-hit D-C and almost beat St. Michael—that we knew it was going to happen at some point.

“Even with all these losses, we’re having a great time. I mean, this season’s been a ton of fun.”

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## Five minutes with...

### Paul Schumacher

**Pitcher/manager, Albertville Villains**

#### How long have you played in the league?

I started my town team career in 1987 with the St. Michael Saints. I played with the Saints from 87-91, & 1993. I played for the Red Eye Countryboys in the Lake & Pine League in 1992. I played with Maple Lake in 1994-95. (The last two years they made it to state.)

#### How did the idea come about to start the Villains?

I started the Villains in 1996. I decided to start the team because I knew there were quite a few guys in the STMA area who were not playing ball but wanted the chance to play.

#### How has your approach to pitching changed over the years?

My approach has changed over the years due to a couple of different factors. Age is beginning to creep up on me. My fastball isn’t as strong as it was in years past, so I try to use my change, curve and slider more to get outs. The other factor is the wood bat. With wood, the guy has got to crush it to get it to go. You can challenge guys without being afraid of giving up the home run.

#### How does your role as player-manager affect your view of each game?

As a player manager, I try to get my younger players more playing time to get them to mature as players. I know there are a lot of

situations where I should bring in myself or another veteran player to pinch hit, but I have been letting the younger guys play through those situations.

#### How would you describe the difference between winning playoff games as a draftee compared to winning games for your own team?

The difference between winning games as a draftee and with your own team probably comes down to the catcher. You get used to throwing to your own catchers during the season. They understand how you want to set up certain hitters and how to call your pitches. When you go to another team, you always feel uncomfortable with the new catcher-his pitch selection, targets, setups and communication. Plus, you always feel like your stealing someone’s position or spot on the team. I am not a big fan of the draft, I think teams should play with their own players. Professional, college and high school bb doesn’t draft pitchers. I have actually felt kind of guilty a few times, knocking out teams in the regions who were using their own pitcher. I pitched Monticello to state and beat Jake Streich in 2000. HL was using all of their own pitchers and made it to the deciding game vs Monticello. I threw 8 innings and left with a 5-3 lead in the 9th and hit a homerun in the game. If I didn’t play, Monticello would not have had any rested pitching for that game. HL would have probably gone to state. See what I mean?

#### What’s your favorite memory of playing in the NSL so far?

I really don’t have a favorite memory. I have a ton of positive memories from all of the teams and players I have played for or with.

# North Star statistics, through June 19

## North Star East

### BATTING LEADERS

NAME	AB	R	H	AVG.
Br Scanlon Lor	24	7	13	.542
J Lesser Alb	35	4	13	.371
A Engebretson MP	34	8	13	.382
J Utech Md	21	4	8	.381
B Mazer MP	30	9	11	.367
A Gregg MP	41	7	15	.366
M Daugs Roc	23	1	8	.348
Bn Scanlon Lor	26	5	9	.346
Ja Juntunen Alb	29	4	10	.345
M Goodwald MP	44	5	15	.341
D Trnka Md	24	0	8	.333
K Koch Lor	22	6	7	.318
R Rassatt Roc	22	0	7	.318
M Duenwald MP	22	3	7	.318
K Johnson MP	38	11	12	.316
S McLaughlin Alb	29	9	9	.310
N Lewin Roc	40	4	12	.300

### 2B Leader

A Gregg MP ..... 5

### 3B Leaders

B Fontana Roc ..... 1  
E Schutte Lor ..... 1  
Ja Juntunen Alb ..... 1

### HR Leaders

S McLaughlin Alb ..... 3  
A Engebretson MP ..... 2

### RBI Leader

A Gregg MP ..... 11

### TEAM PITCHING LEADERS

NAME	IP	W	L	SO	ERA
A Gregg MP	28	5	0	19	0.32
P Sycks Md	12	0	1	7	1.42
M Ricke Lor	26	3	0	11	2.70
P Schumacher Alb	37	2	2	26	2.89
J Lesser Roc	34	1	3	20	3.12

## North Star Central

### BATTING LEADERS

NAME	AB	R	H	AVG.
M Bergstrom DC	29	9	15	.517
C Raiche ML	35	8	18	.514
D Falde Del	35	3	16	.457
A Dammann Hut	34	8	13	.382
P Burkstrand DC	35	6	13	.371
N Johnson ML	41	8	15	.366
J Olson Del	25	9	9	.360
C Henke Hut	37	5	12	.324
M Kutter Hut	37	4	12	.324
J Janzen Del	31	5	10	.323
M Freske StM	31	4	10	.323
B Fobbe ML	35	6	11	.314
B Opsahl DC	32	4	10	.313
K Jerpseth ML	39	7	12	.308

### 2B Leader

C Raiche ML ..... 6

### 3B Leader

P Burkstrand DC ..... 2

### HR Leader

J Barbeln StM ..... 4

### RBI Leader

C Raiche ML ..... 17

### TEAM PITCHING LEADERS

NAME	IP	W	L	SO	ERA
J Janzen Del	29	3	0	16	0.31
J Farenbaugh Hut	30	2	0	22	1.17
D Birkholz DC	38	2	2	24	1.63
R Klingelhofer ML	30	4	0	15	2.40
P Schumm St M	20	1	1	8	2.61

## North Star West

### BATTING LEADERS

NAME	AB	R	H	AVE.
J Kennedy Mon	17	9	10	.588
T Hoaglund Mon	22	2	11	.500
N Hill Buf	32	1	13	.406
B Veches Mon	23	5	9	.391
J Holthaus Mon	30	7	11	.367
L Gagnon HL	31	5	10	.323
J Van Culin Mon	32	6	10	.313
M Enerson Kin	23	5	7	.304

### 2B Leaders

T Hoaglund Mon ..... 3  
B Aho Kin ..... 3

### 3B Leader

B Borrell HL ..... 1

### HR Leaders

T Hoaglund Mon ..... 1  
A DesMarais HL ..... 1  
Al Hendrickson Kin ..... 1

### RBI Leader

T Hoaglund Mon ..... 9

### TEAM PITCHING LEADERS

NAME	IP	W	L	SO	ERA
A Koch HL	34	5	0	32	0.79
C Hardie Mon	24	3	1	12	1.50
B Paulson Kin	24	1	1	13	2.25
N Hill Buf	37	0	3	32	2.63