

The North Star League

Spectator

55th Year

North Star Standings

West

| | W | L | GB |
|-------------|----|----|----|
| Monticello | 11 | 3 | -- |
| Howard Lake | 10 | 6 | 2 |
| Buffalo | 4 | 10 | 7 |
| Kingston | 3 | 11 | 8 |

Central

| | W | L | GB |
|---------------|----|---|----|
| Maple Lake | 10 | 3 | -- |
| Delano | 10 | 4 | .5 |
| Dassel-Cokato | 10 | 5 | 1 |
| St. Michael | 9 | 6 | 2 |
| Hutchinson | 7 | 8 | 4 |

East

| | W | L | GB |
|-------------|----|----|-----|
| Maple Plain | 13 | 3 | -- |
| Loretto | 7 | 8 | 5.5 |
| Albertville | 5 | 10 | 7.5 |
| Rockford | 3 | 13 | 10 |
| Mound | 3 | 13 | 10 |

Central coming down to wire

The Class B sectionals don't start for another few weeks, but the next eight days will feel like the first round of the playoffs for the Central division. The logjam at the top leaves three teams in reach of the pennant with two others not far behind.

Wednesday night in Dassel provided a look at the coming week's intensity. St. Michael and D-C came in sporting identical 9-5 records. The winner would pull within a game of league-leader Maple Lake, while the loser would be mathematically eliminated from pennant contention. D-C eked out a 5-4 victory to stay alive in the Central. St. Michael's pennant hopes were dashed on account of Sunday's game pitting Maple Lake and Delano. The Saints would need both the Lakers and the A's to lose out in order to overtake them, and one of those two teams will win on Sunday.

So, will Sunday's game mint us a new Central champion? Not quite. A win in

Remaining Games

| | |
|---|--|
| Friday, July 15 Hutchinson at Maple Lake Delano at D-C | Tuesday, July 19 Delano at St. Michael |
| Saturday, July 16 Loretto at Maple Lake | Wednesday, July 20 Maple Lake at St. Michael |
| Sunday, July 17 Maple Lake at Delano | Friday, July 22 Hutchinson at D-C |

this game will be huge, but both Maple Lake and Delano have other big games ahead. The potential fly in the Lakers' ointment is tomorrow's rain reschedule against Loretto. It's a winnable game, but this means Maple Lake will come into Sunday's tilt having played two straight days against potential spoilers. That's one more favorable condition for host Delano.

D-C isn't in the most enviable position, but it's in the calmest one. If the Saints beat Delano tonight, they could potentially control their destiny by next Friday.

And the ifs go on. Ain't it great?

Larson elected to state Hall of Fame

It was something few who know Brian Larson had ever heard him say: "I'm kind of dumbfounded."

But he had a right to be speechless last night. The longtime NSL secretary had just learned he'd been elected to the Minnesota Amateur Hall of Fame—one of just four members for the Class of 2005.

Dassel-Cokato manager Mark Forsman spearheaded the secret effort to promote Larson as an HOF candidate. Larson's friends from the D-C Baseball Association and around the league submitted nomination ballots to the state board in St. Cloud.

"I feel pretty humbled," he admitted. "Guys like me don't usually get in there. They've raised the bar pretty high."

The bar is up there, to be sure, but Larson has spent most of his adult life working hard to reach it. Although he played all of two innings for the D-C Saints, his behind-the-scenes work to organize the North Star League and the state tournament have gone on for decades. He's no stranger to the state board, serving as a board member for nine years and state tournament official scorer for 16. Larson has also authored a pair of books on the history of baseball in Dassel and the NSL's first 50 years.

It only seems like Brian Larson has been part of the Minnesota Baseball Association forever. Now he gets to *be* part of it forever. Congratulations, Bookie!

Class C divisionals: A look ahead

Monticello, Maple Plain take division titles

The strategy in the East and the West this year wasn't complicated: hit the ball harder than the other guys. That's why the two teams that hit harder and more often than anyone else finished the season atop their divisions. Maple Plain dismissed any hint of a race over a month ago, while Monticello used a 6-1 victory over Loretto on Wednesday to finally beat back Howard Lake. Now that the regular season is over, let's take a glimpse at the divisional playoffs to come. (Playoff brackets on page 3.)

Can anyone beat Maple Plain?

Let's put it this way: All the Class B teams are thankful they don't have to deal with the Diamond Devils anymore. Everything has come together for Maple Plain this year. They have an endless supply of pitchers, and their lineup is solid from top to bottom. Not only are the Diamond Devils the best team in the league, they're a legitimate contender for the Class C state title. The scary part is that this team might only be better next year. Most of their core players aren't too far out of high school, and yet they've been playing together for years. That gives Maple Plain a potent combination: loads of experience, yet still a couple years short of their peak. And you wonder why John Timpe's smiling these days.

Any spoilers in the mix?

This may be the year Albertville breaks through. As the Villains showed against Monticello (an 8-5 win on July 8), they have a good team when everyone's there. Their offense knows how to put runs on the board. The key will be to get as many good innings out of Josh Juntunen, Ryan Aaserud, Todd Klaers, and

Mike Fleischer as possible. Paul Schumacher is always reliable, but the Villains have left the party early in recent years because pitching ran out. Maybe this is the year they put things together.

Does anyone look ripe for the picking?

Howard Lake, though we hope we're dead wrong. It's just hard to see where the Orphans will get the kind of offense they need for the playoffs. Ever since their mid-June consecutive shutout wins over D-C and St. Michael, the Orphans have sort of flattened out. Monticello and Buffalo buried them in the past week, and they let Kingston score four times in the bottom of the ninth before winning in extra innings. Adam Koch and Andy Gagnon have pitched valiantly in place of Heberstreich, but the Orphans need the extra veteran leadership on the mound right now. Again, nobody roots against Howard Lake...but short of a late-season trade for Bret Boone, it's tough to see where they'll get the boost they need in the postseason.

They still had 10 wins. Who could knock them out?

Remember, all it takes is two quick losses. As the last couple weeks showed, they can no longer look past Buffalo and Kingston. Buffalo is unpredictable but dangerous, while Kingston's putting out a vastly better product than we saw a year ago.

What about out East? Could Mound or Rockford pounce?

Hey, anything's possible. Mound's playoff run two years ago set the Mallards up for a big season in 2004. But that team has had absolutely no karma all year long. Andy Snyder's crew could benefit most from an offseason to regroup. Rockford is spunky but a little inexperienced yet. Look for a great battle between Loretto and Albertville to decide who joins Maple Plain at regions.

around the horn

South rallies past North in NSL All-Star Game

The South All-Stars staged a late rally on July 1 and beat the North in 10 innings, 5-4. Delano's Jon Wilson had a night to remember. After winning the pregame home-run derby, he tied the game with a solo shot when it counted—the bottom of the eighth—enabling the South to eventually scratch out the win.

Wilson's power display was a nice contrast to recent Delano squads. Despite the A's gaudy records, they've had the toughest time of any NSL team of hitting round-trippers. (At least they're honest about their small-ball ways. The poll question on delanoathletics.com asks fans which of five NSL teams will hit the most homers this season, and they didn't list themselves.) Newcomer Wilson has provided a welcome boost, as he's tied for the league lead in home runs.

The '05 All-Star Game at Howard Lake had the highest gate of any NSL midsummer classic, beating last year's game at Dasel by \$41.

New league partner in 11C

The state board recently realigned playoff regions across central Minnesota, resulting in a new partner for the NSL's representatives. Our C teams will now square off against winners from the Central Valley League. The CVL includes perennial powerhouse Watkins as well as Eden Valley, St. Augusta, St. Nicholas, Kimball, Luxemburg, Pearl Lake, and the Cold Spring Rockies. This ends our association with the Lakewood League, recently represented by St. Cloud Orthopedic, Sauk Rapids, HR Pesty's, and Clear Lake.

Boom!

Here's all you need to know about the

Loretto-Albertville game this past Sunday: Albertville racked up 24 hits. And lost.

In a ridiculous display of offense, the Larks and the Villains combined for 43 hits overall as Loretto squeaked out a 16-15 win. Loretto starter Nick Koch surrendered 14 runs on 22 hits in seven innings and nearly got the win. The bottom seven hitters in Albertville's lineup went on a rare toot, with six of them rapping at least three hits. The host Villains scored in every one of the first eight innings but unfortunately couldn't counter Loretto's two biggies in the top of the ninth.

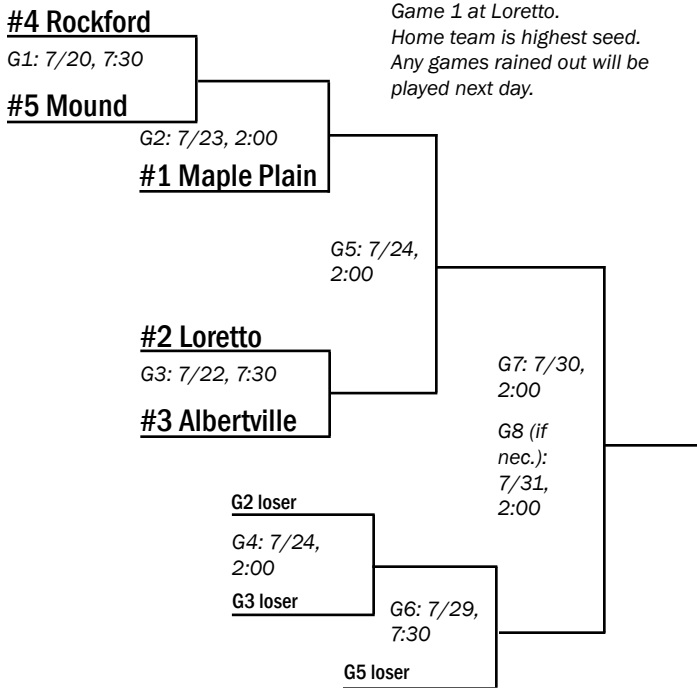
Boxscore line of the week

On June 30 against Mound, St. Michael's Nick Volkmann racked up this line: 1 AB, 1 run, 0 hits, 0 RBIs. Oh yeah, and this little stat at the bottom: 3 HBPs. Something tells us Volkmann's first name doesn't do these pitches justice, either.

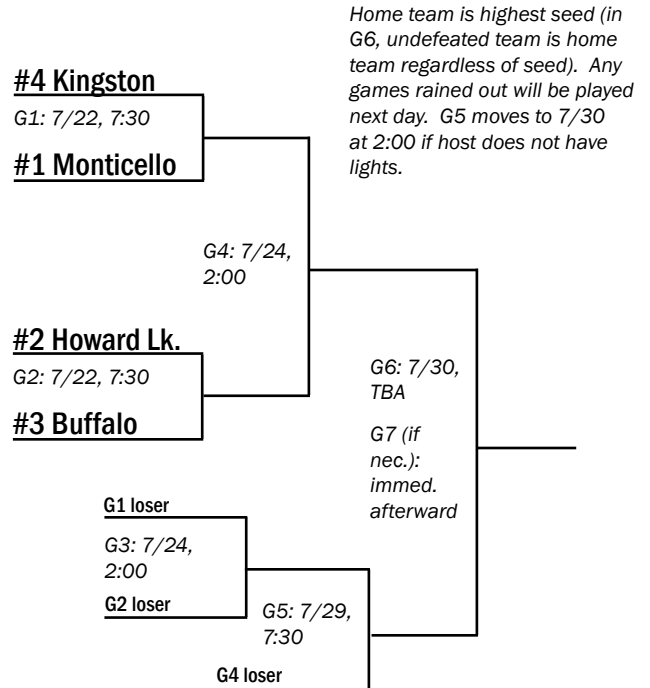
Kings for a day

Class C divisional playoff brackets

East



West



Five minutes with...

Keith Jerpseth

Catcher, Maple Lake Lakers

How long have you played in the league, and where did you play before joining the Lakers?

This is my 6th year with the Lakers. In 1994, I played for Anoka, then was away from amateur baseball for a few years.

Is the NSL different from other leagues you've seen or played in?

The North Star League is a great combination of Class B teams and Class C teams. We have some very tough C teams in the North Star League such as Monticello, Howard Lake, and Maple Plain, which makes every game competitive. There are also some nice rivalries in the league. We look forward to battling with DC, Delano, Hutch and St. Mike every year.

The Lakers have put together their most successful regular season in recent years. How has this year been different?

We have recently overcome injuries to key players Todd Fuller and Darrin Decker. We have been able to put together good pitching, solid defense and some timely hitting.

What will it take to sustain this level of play?

To keep rolling we need the pitching and defense. Our hits will come; if we pitch well and make the plays defensively, I feel good about the stretch run.

How did you decide catcher was your position? Does it give you a unique view on the game?

I don't know if I "decided" on catching. In high school, I was a shortstop until my senior year, when my coach told me we needed a catcher, and catching some at a younger age, I was the guy. As I progressed and pitchers I caught were better, I really enjoyed being back there. As a catcher, you are involved in every play, you really do have some control. It is so much fun to catch a pitcher who is hitting is spots with 2 or 3 pitches. It really allows a catcher to think about setting hitters up.

Which team are you most wary of, heading into the playoffs?

In the playoffs you need to beware of everyone. You never know what Hamel has, DC is always tough in the playoffs, St. Mike has some hitters that can turn it on, and both Delano and Hutch are scrappy. You can never look past anybody.

North Star statistics, through July 13

North Star East

BATTING LEADERS

| NAME | AB | R | H | AVG. |
|------------------|----|----|----|------|
| A Engebretson MP | 54 | 18 | 26 | .481 |
| Br Scanlon Lor | 52 | 15 | 25 | .481 |
| E Schutte Lor | 53 | 15 | 24 | .453 |
| A Gregg MP | 60 | 18 | 25 | .417 |
| Jo Juntunen Alb | 40 | 10 | 16 | .400 |
| N Lewin Roc | 62 | 10 | 23 | .371 |
| B Mazer MP | 35 | 12 | 13 | .371 |
| J Lesser Roc | 55 | 4 | 20 | .364 |
| R Schaust Lor | 33 | 6 | 12 | .364 |
| K Rogers Alb | 34 | 9 | 12 | .353 |
| R Rassatt Roc | 40 | 0 | 14 | .350 |
| J Utech Md | 47 | 8 | 16 | .340 |
| M Goodwald MP | 61 | 10 | 20 | .328 |
| K Johnson MP | 58 | 18 | 19 | .328 |
| P Harrell Md | 43 | 12 | 14 | .326 |
| K Koch Lor | 47 | 9 | 15 | .319 |
| T Traen Lor | 38 | 3 | 12 | .316 |
| Littlefield Roc | 54 | 12 | 17 | .315 |
| Bn Scanlon Lor | 51 | 10 | 16 | .314 |
| P Sycks Md | 51 | 6 | 16 | .314 |
| S McLaughlin Alb | 56 | 16 | 17 | .304 |
| M Dausg Roc | 46 | 7 | 14 | .304 |

2B Leader

A Gregg MP9

3B Leader

B Fontana Roc2

E Schutte Lor2

A Gregg MP2

HR Leader

S McLaughlin Alb4

A Engbretston MP4

RBI Leader

A Engebretson MP20

TEAM PITCHING LEADERS

| NAME | IP | W | L | SO | ERA |
|------------------|----|---|---|----|------|
| A Gregg MP | 34 | 6 | 0 | 20 | 0.26 |
| P Schumacher Alb | 54 | 3 | 3 | 35 | 2.49 |
| S Mauricio Roc | 32 | 1 | 3 | 16 | 3.58 |
| M Ricke Lor | 51 | 3 | 3 | 25 | 3.68 |
| J Utech Md | 30 | 0 | 4 | 26 | 4.50 |

North Star Central

BATTING LEADERS

| NAME | AB | R | H | AVG. |
|-----------------|----|----|----|------|
| M Bergstrom DC | 42 | 12 | 20 | .476 |
| C Raiche ML | 52 | 12 | 23 | .442 |
| J Wilson Del | 46 | 6 | 19 | .413 |
| J Barbeln StM | 49 | 8 | 18 | .367 |
| P Burkstrand DC | 44 | 8 | 16 | .364 |
| M Freske StM | 48 | 6 | 17 | .354 |
| A Dammann Hut | 55 | 10 | 19 | .345 |
| C Volkmann StM | 32 | 10 | 11 | .344 |
| J Olson Del | 35 | 11 | 12 | .343 |
| D Falde Del | 44 | 4 | 15 | .341 |
| K Jerpseth ML | 53 | 12 | 18 | .340 |
| N Johnson ML | 57 | 9 | 19 | .333 |
| D Birkholz DC | 45 | 11 | 15 | .333 |
| J Janzen Del | 51 | 10 | 16 | .314 |
| C Henke Hut | 55 | 6 | 17 | .309 |
| M Kutter Hut | 55 | 4 | 17 | .309 |
| B Fobbe ML | 49 | 7 | 15 | .306 |
| N Volkmann StM | 40 | 6 | 12 | .300 |

2B Leader

C Raiche ML7

3B Leaders

P Burkstrand DC2

N Volkmann StM2

HR Leaders

J Barbeln StM4

J Wilson Del4

RBI Leader

C Raiche ML20

TEAM PITCHING LEADERS

| NAME | IP | W | L | SO | ERA |
|-------------------|----|---|---|----|------|
| J Janzen Del | 45 | 4 | 1 | 28 | 0.40 |
| D Birkholz DC | 52 | 4 | 2 | 33 | 1.56 |
| J Farenbaugh Hut | 36 | 2 | 1 | 25 | 2.21 |
| P Schumm St M | 26 | 2 | 1 | 12 | 2.42 |
| R Klingelhofer ML | 44 | 6 | 0 | 21 | 2.45 |

North Star West

BATTING LEADERS

| NAME | AB | R | H | AVG. |
|------------------|----|----|----|------|
| J Kennedy Mon | 28 | 12 | 15 | .536 |
| D Burkholder Mon | 24 | 7 | 11 | .458 |
| J Stueven HL | 29 | 6 | 12 | .414 |
| N Hill Buf | 52 | 4 | 20 | .385 |
| K Holker Mon | 22 | 4 | 8 | .364 |
| J Holthaus Mon | 49 | 9 | 17 | .347 |
| M Enerson Kin | 41 | 7 | 14 | .341 |
| T Hoaglund Mon | 37 | 2 | 12 | .324 |
| L Gagnon HL | 50 | 10 | 15 | .300 |
| J Van Culin Mon | 60 | 8 | 18 | .300 |

2B Leader

Al Hendrickson Kin 5

3B Leader

B Borrell HL 1

N Forga Kin 1

B Aho Kin 1

J Van Culin Mon 1

HR Leader

B Weber Buf 2

A DesMarais HL 1

RBI Leader

B Borrell HL 10

TEAM PITCHING LEADERS

| NAME | IP | W | L | SO | ERA |
|---------------|----|---|---|----|------|
| C Hardie Mon | 33 | 3 | 1 | 20 | 1.09 |
| A Koch HL | 55 | 6 | 1 | 51 | 1.14 |
| B Paulson Kin | 26 | 1 | 1 | 16 | 2.42 |
| N Hill Buf | 40 | 0 | 4 | 36 | 2.88 |