

Preview Issue



2023 FINAL STANDINGS

Team	Wins	Losses	Pct	GB
Delano	21	1	0.955	0
Maple Lake	18	4	0.818	3
Hutchinson	16	6	0.727	5
Loretto	14	8	0.636	7
Buffalo	12	10	0.545	9
Litchfield	12	10	0.545	9
Maple Plain	10	12	0.455	11
D-C	9	13	0.409	12
Cokato	8	14	0.364	13
Howard Lake	7	15	0.318	14
Rockford	4	18	0.182	17
Waverly	1	21	0.045	20

Predictions

Since Delano lost only one league game in 2023, it's no surprise the A's are predicted to take the championship again in 2024. Of course, the fact Maple Lake won the state tournament puts them right behind Delano in the preseason predictions. Hutchinson has been the other team that consistently competes for the title and comes in third in the prediction list. Buffalo is picked fourth with Loretto chosen to be fifth, slightly ahead of Litchfield, rounding out the top half of the league.

The seventh spot is important as the last seed to get a bye to the Regionals. Our straw poll of managers gives D-C the slight edge to be seventh over Howard Lake, chosen to be eighth. The team that finishes eighth plays the bottom four in the league play-in. The bottom four are predicted to be Cokato, Maple Plain, Rockford and Montrose/Waverly.

Hall of Fame 2024 – **Nate Johnson** of Maple Lake will be inducted 7/19. He played for the Lakers for 16 years. Nate showed great fielding skill at second base. Nate was a lifetime 300 hitter with 138 RBIs, many of those were game winners. Nate's biggest RBI came when he drove in the game winning run in the 2012 state championship game.

Kyle Messner of Hutchinson will be inducted on 7/14. He played for the Huskies for over 30 years. An excellent pitcher, Kyle won 32 games in league play, striking out 387 with a 2.86 ERA in his career.



**“There are only two seasons:
winter and baseball.”**



Buffalo 12-10 in 2023 The Bulldogs return 6 core players – Cal James, Noah Christenson, Kai Brisk, Ethan Hanson, Evan Soeffker and Colton Haight who should keep them competitive at or near the top of the league. They lose one long time veteran, Brett Renshaw for one year, but will count on Taylor Morrissette, Broc Mutterer and Calbe Breuer to make a larger impact in 2024. Buffalo should be able to score runs with their line-up of hitters and believes their defense can be another strength. The goal for Bulldog pitchers is to be better at throwing strikes and giving up less free passes. Overall, Buffalo expects to compete for a top seven spot and bye to the Regions and hopefully advance to State.



Cokato 8-14 in 2023 The Kernels lose some valuable veterans in Tom Halonen and Riley Gruenhagen as well as Grant Haataja and Jackson Martin, but still return a lot of their roster. Back again are Bill Aho, Isaac Nelson, Austin Kantola, Alan Pietila, Sanders Aplin, Jason Ross, Jaeger Ohm and Steven Schmitt. Also returning are Vinnie Pokornowski and Chad Koivisto. Add in 5 players that could contribute more like Kenyan Linkon, Grayson Londerville, Jackson Schrupp, Trenton Ziedler and Jason Gustafson. Cokato has moved up in the standings when their pitching comes through, so naturally, that is where they pin their hopes on their hurlers Stepping it up and keeping them competitive. They will have good speed and plenty of left handed hitters to throw at their opponents. With a large roster, the Kernels expect to have flexibility on offense and defense.



D-C 9-13 in 2023 The Saints bring a tom of players back with the goal of getting back to state. Tyler Brandel, Jordan Flick, Ben Lindquist, Dylan Weber, Noah Halonen, Josiah Bullivant, Nikolai Niemela, Michael Leffler, Paul Vetsch, August Flick, Collin Krick, Jacob Niemela, Paul Jacobson, Graham Jacobson, Steve Boger and Jim Althoff all return. They add HS player Jayce Olthoff and a couple guys, Jon Guenigsman and Jake Hendrickson, who they believe will help on the mound. Lost from last year are Toby Colline, Cy Flick and James Howell. After winning the play-in part of the playoffs to reach the Regions, The Saints hope to move into the Regionals by winning enough to avoid the play-in games and will rely on continuing the improvement they saw on the mound, at the plate and in the field in 2023 to upgrade the win-loss record.



Delano 21-1 in 2023 The A's have a difficult task in front of them if they want to repeat their 21-1 record. They return a lot of veterans including Max Otto, Jake Nelson, Marcus Riewer, Austin Schneider, Jackson Royer and Ty Weiman. In addition, Toby Hanson, Trevor Jaunich, Mike Weber, Jeremy Maschino, Adam Schleper, Jack Paulson and Nate Norman do a lot of damage. Hunter Hart is not returning. Oran Hinkle, Cade Bruett, Gavin Popp and Gunnar Paulson add more depth. New to the team this year are Blake Ask and Cael Olson The A's pitching staff is as deep as any in the league, their line up scores plenty of runs and they have veterans at every position defensively. It will be no surprise if they are again competing for the top spot.



**“Baseball is like driving,
it’s the one who gets home
safely that counts.”**



Howard Lake 7-15 in 2023 The Orphans are not used to being in the bottom four, so they are looking for improvement from their young squad in order to move back up a few spots in the standings. Mike Dockendorf, Jared Koch and Shane Kahn return to handle the bulk of work on the mound. Jake & Riley Greunhagen, Garrett Zander, Mitch Baumann, Brad Bickmann, Sam Kittock and Matt Streich provide veteran leadership. The roster will be filled out by college players Cole & Mason Maczlewski and Bennett Anderson along with High School players Steven Heber, Colton Long, Alex Zimmerman and Marcus Burau. The Orphans expect to develop their young players throughout the season, hoping to peak going into Playoffs.



Hutchinson 16-6 in 2023 The Huskies will again be a contender for the League title based on the players that will be back. Jake Wendland, Matt Piechowski, Jayden Fleck, Cody Arlt, Marcus Hahn, John DeRock, Tyler Schiller, Lane Glaser, Billy & Caleb Marquardt and Adam Katzenmeyer bring a lot of town team experience to the Huskies. In addition, help should come from KK Starrett, Kyle Schumann, Hayden Smith and newcomer Carter Kurth. After all these years, Kyle Messner is the lone player gone from the Huskies. The offense should put up runs, the defense is solid and the starting staff looks strong. Consistent relief pitching is the one thing they hope will improve. Hutchinson again appears to be a top three contender for the title and a spot at State.



Litchfield 12-10 in 2023 The Blues continue to be a young, but improving team. Key returning players are Joey Hyde, Avery Liestman and Ben Alsleben on the mound along with a lineup that includes Jake Jones, Andrew Loch, Winky Estrada, Jordan & Bennett Lecher, Eric Hulterstrum, Ryan Quast, Jack Ramthun, Riley Taber, Eddie Estrada and Carson Deal. Help should also be available from Hunter Thiel, Caden Besener, Cal Jones, Connor Taber, Bradley Larson, Owen Carlson and newcomers Cam Baalson and Hunter Schultz. Like the last few years, the pitching remains a strength and defense appears sound. Offense improved last year and the Blues feel ready to get past the Regions and into State.



Loretto 14-8 in 2023 The Larks complete pitching staff is back for 2024 and makes them a team to be reckoned with this year. Back are Bradley, Corey, Joshua & Caleb Koskie, Tyler Maher, Ben Leuthner and Josh Gullickson on the roster. Max Hudlow and Jack Scanlon should get more opportunities and catcher Fysher Rowan has been added. Nick Kulseth will not be back and Nathan Maher is retiring after 16 years with the Larks. The Larks believe their experience, mixed with youth in the lineup and a veteran pitching staff will carry them to many victories this year. The Larks goal is to once again earn a bye to Regional and make it into State.



I HAVE BASEBALL IN MY
BLOOD, BASEBALL IS ALL
I'VE EVER WANTED TO DO.



Maple Lake 18-4 in 2023 The Lakers have the unique challenge of defending their State tournament title. They have not lost anyone or added anyone. Back for 2024 are Hunter Malachek, Ben Clapp, Donnie Mavencamp, Luke Fobbe, Riley Decker, Logan Orazem, Ben Goelz, Grant Mergen, Brock Goelz, Mitch Wurm, Ryley Hagen, Nick Preisinger, Alex Winslow, Greg Giebenhain, Jordan Tanner and Matt Bergstrom. They expect pitchers Ben Reilley and Gavin Wolff to come back healthy and expect Jarrett Faue to see more mound time. Brady Scanlon and Jake Bergstrom should earn more playing time this season as well. Maple Lake certainly has the experience, the arms and the bats to contend for the North State League title and could take their defense of the State title deep into the tournament.



Maple Plain 10-12 in 2023 The Diamond Devils return a solid group of core players - TJ Carlson, Colton Peters, Logan Kinsel, Calvin Rippberger, Gunnar Goodwin, Kyle Bode, Jimmy Fafinski, AJ Anhorn, Ollie Stevenson, Drew Dorsey and Jackson Erwin. Hopefully, they will improve with Kyle Bode available all year, Gunnar Goodwin continuing to improve, Ollie Stevenson tossing more innings, Jackson Erwin maintaining consistency and TJ Carlson closing games. Maple Plain will be young with no player over 27 as veterans Mike Frericks, Lance Reynolds, Nick Altavilla, Nick and Jake Hartmann and Stephen Webster will not be returning. If offense picks up where it left off in 2023, the Devils believe pitching and defense will get them more wins than losses.



Montrose/Waverly 1-21 in 2023 The Stingers decided to go young this year and believe they will improve with talented young players as long as they throw strikes. The Stingers return the heart of their line-up - Kirby Moynagh, Brady Boddeker and Alex Smothers. In addition, they bring back Andrew Moynagh Brady Skoog, Jacob Noor, Emmet Bekkula and the ace of their staff Bill Aamodt. Skoog, Noor and Collin Smith are expected to contribute more in their second year. Nick Zellmer is back and 6 new players (4 from High School) will add youth to the line-up. Travis Bickman is out for one year with an injury. If they can overcome inexperience and pitchers can throw strikes, the Stingers expect to stay competitive every game and reach their goal of moving up in the standings.



Rockford 4-18 in 2023 The Crows struggled through the early part of 2023, but earned three of their victories late. Still a very young team, they plan on further improvement in 2024. Ryan Schutter, Nick Binnebose, Jacob Kraft, Nolan Perry, Mark Ricke, Keith Bury, John Haugan, John Redepenny, Todd Traen, Patrick Binnebose, Soren Peterson, Aaron Jensen and a healthy Mike Nelson return for Rockford. Nick Binnebose and Ryan Schutter should help after gaining some college ball experience. Aiden Smith and Wilson Sanderson graduate this spring and will have more time to play for the Crows. Added to the team are Connor Schreckenghaust and Miles Kay. Youth is the strength and weakness of the Crows. Having fun and working to be competitive every game gives them a chance to be an improving team this year.