



American Legion Minnesota Division I Tournament

Gazette



Volume 14, No. 4

Hibbing, Minnesota

Sunday, August 1, 2010

The Three Big E's make it to last day

Three teams advanced to the final day of the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Tournament at Hibbing.

Eden Prairie topped Excelsior 12-3 in the final game of the day to advance to the championship game Sunday to be held at Al Nyberg Field. Eden Prairie, the sole unbeaten team in the tourney, will automatically advance to an American Legion national regional game this coming week.

Eagan came through the losers' bracket to also make the final day with a 14-7 win over North St. Paul. Eagan will face Excelsior in the early game Sunday with a chance to advance to the championship tilt.

Whoever wins the 10 a.m. game will also advance to the national region.

Minnesota's two winners will advance to regionals in Mattoon, Illinois and Blue Springs, Missouri. Play begins Thursday at those sites. Winners of those regionals will advance to the American Legion World Series in Spokane, Washington.

Earlier in the day, North St. Paul sent Fergus Falls home by defeating the last outstate team 7-3.

The victory gave North St. Paul a chance to continue playing, but their quest was ended when they lost to Eagan.

In another early game, Eagan defeated Eastview 4-1.

The 1 p.m. game at Nyberg Field will determine the state champion even if Eden Prairie loses. There is no double-elimination in the final game.

In Division II play at Dilworth and Fargo, Ely defeated BOLD 4-2 to advance to the consolation championship.

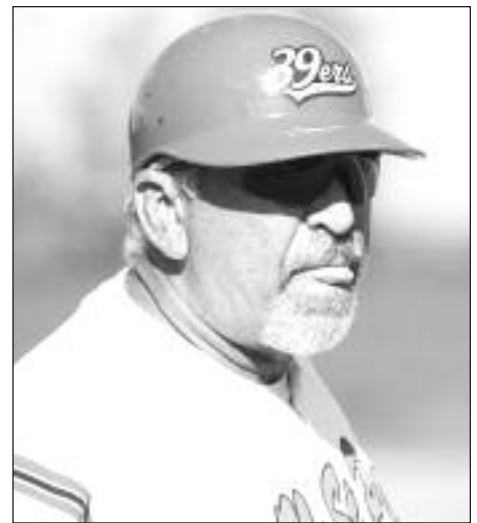
Holdingford topped Wells 6-0 to also advance. In the consolation finals, Holdingford topped Ely 4-2.

In the championship bracket, LaCrescent defeated Ada 10-0 to reach the final. In the last game of the day, Jordan beat Dilworth 4-2.

In the third place game Sunday, Ada will take on Dilworth. In the championship game, LaCrescent will play Jordan.

Jordan has won four out of the last five state tournaments -- the lone exception was last year when Eden Valley-Watkins won the state title.

Division I teams in Minnesota are from the larger schools, while Division II teams are from the smaller communities.



Mr. 500

Ron Adams of North St. Paul has amassed over 500 victories in a Legion coaching career that spans 24 years.

North St. Paul's Adams twists his way through 500 victories

By John Sherman

During the heat of battle in a State Legion Tournament elimination game Saturday morning in Hibbing, the song "Twist and Shout" came on the loudspeaker between innings.

"C'mon, Ronnie!" one of the players in the North St. Paul dugout shouted.

That was the cue. North St. Paul head coach Ron Adams broke into his own version of the twist for about 10 seconds. The team loved it, the crowd loved it and even the Fergus Falls players responded with applause.

Adams has been "twisting" his way across the state's American Legion fields

for 24 years. His unique coaching style has produced competitive teams year after year, and best of all for the players, there's never a dull moment.

When Adams notched his 500th career victory earlier this season, his players were more excited than he was. They are also excited with their third-in-state ranking and a 29-7 overall record.

"Ron is the funnest coach I've ever had," said NSP first baseman Robbie Youngdahl, who hit a home run in Saturday's 7-3 victory over Fergus Falls. "He jokes around a lot, he has fun and we play hard for him."

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Larry and the Babe team up for Hibbing tournament

By John Sherman

Nine years ago in March, Larry Pocrnich's life changed forever.

His car was hit by a drunk driver just three blocks from home while he was on the way to pick up his granddaughter, 4, for an overnight.

Due to his injuries, Larry has been semi-retired since then, but even in retirement the former police officer finds ways to serve his community.

This week, he is serving as co-director of the host committee for the State Legion Baseball Tournament along with longtime youth sports enthusiast and umpire Babe Glumack.

Taking on a project as daunting as the State Legion Tournament is never easy, as Larry has discovered. He basically hasn't had an "off day" in about a year. There are so many details to consider with the tournament spread out at four locations on the Iron Range, but with Babe's experience and help, Larry is confident the host committee will be able to cover all the bases.

"It's not over yet," said Larry in an interview Saturday morning. "When Babe came to me with the idea of hosting the State Legion Tournament, I knew it would be a big project."

There was a scare Friday night when rain delays lasted approximately an hour at both Hibbing and Nashwauk, but with the help of grounds crews at both fields, no one missed a beat.

The tournament got off to a flying start with a banquet for 475 people, including all of the players and coaches, Wednesday night.

When he arrived at the ballpark in Hibbing Thursday morning, Larry was thrilled to see the handiwork of groundskeeper Craig Stolhammer, who chalked in a full-color American Legion Baseball insignia twenty feet behind home plate.

Larry has handled the off-field activities, such as the banquet, along with finances, while Babe has taken charge of the baseball.

And talk about taking charge. Babe was behind the plate umpiring the first game of the tournament at Al Nyberg Field in Hibbing.

Babe is one of the best-known umpires ever to come out of Minnesota and has



The Brain Trust

Babe Glumack and Larry Pocrnich have been working for over a year to make the Hibbing state Legion baseball tourney a major success.

friends all over the country, due in large part to his winning personality. He might be the only man in Minnesota to umpire in both an American Legion World Series and a Little League World Series.

Advancing through the Little League ranks to the World Series was a thrill in itself, Babe said.

"I was fortunate enough to umpire two years in Williamsport," he said. "It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

Closer to home, Babe umpired collegiate ball in the Big Ten Conference from 1985 through 1993. Most of his umpiring has been done on the Range. That's where he feels most comfortable.

"You always want to do well in your hometown," said Babe, who has umpired thousands of games at all levels, from Little League through professional ball. "As far as the tournament, we want people to go back home saying we had a good experience here."

"Babe isn't different from other umpires, he's unique ... in a good way," said Larry. "I played baseball in town up until the time of my accident, and that's how I met Babe."

The host committee had 16 games to help administer on Thursday and eight more on Friday. The action slowed down Saturday with only four games and today's schedule consists of two games at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. At about 4:30, Minnesota's Legion Baseball Director Darwin Berg will crown the 2010 Division I state cham-

pion.

The physical and mental demands of running a tournament of this magnitude are something many people never experience.

"You have a 2 a.m. sleep time and you're going again at 8 a.m.," said Larry. "Legion is all about family. My son [B.J.] has been helping as a runner and two of my grandkids were ball shaggers the other day."

"My daughter and my wife have been down here working," said Babe. "I want to thank the state directors for their support. They do a great job."

When the State Legion Tournament ends today, Larry will slow down for a couple days, and then concentrate on his duties as 8th District American Legion Commander.

Larry said he enjoys working in other American Legion programs besides baseball. "We have a scholarship program, oratory, scouting and fishing for veterans. The American Legion offers so many opportunities, especially for youth. I believe every post should have an opportunity to sponsor a Legion Baseball team."

"All of the players and fans have been very courteous and respectful this week," said Babe. "And I'd give each of the other three towns involved (Cohasset, Grand Rapids and Nashwauk) an 'A' rating. The tournament helps those towns, as well as Hibbing. A lot of great memories will be made this week."

Eden Prairie and Eagan post big wins

If you want to win a State Legion Baseball title, you have to hit the ball.

Eagan and Eden Prairie demonstrated how it's done as they scored big wins Saturday at Hibbing's Al Nyberg Field.

J.D. Dorgan slammed a home run off the top of the scoreboard to lead Eagan past North St. Paul 14-7 in a losers' bracket game. Eagan treated their fans to 16 hits, and North St. Paul countered with 15.

What did Dorgan say about his home run?

"Right away, I thought it was a fly out, but the wind took it and carried it out," he said.

Dorgan had a productive day with a homer, a double, a walk, a hit by pitch and four RBI.

"We're beating the teams now that beat us early in the season," he said. "We're on a roll right now ... it is an honor to be one of the final three in the State Tournament."

Adam Carl also had a great day in Eagan's victory as he contributed three hits.

"We won't let one loss get us down," said Carl, referring to Eagan's 16-10 setback at the hands of Eden Prairie Friday night. "We have fun and keep the hits coming."

Eagan will face Excelsior in today's first game at 10:30 a.m. The winner of that game will earn a Regional berth and also the right to play Eden Prairie for the championship today at 1 p.m.

Eden Prairie rolled to a 12-3 victory over Excelsior in Saturday's winners' bracket final as Caleb Phillips pitched a masterpiece.

Matt Halloran's three hits and Tim Miller's two-run homer propelled Eden Prairie to an early 7-1 lead, and Phillips and his defense took it from there.

"If we give up a few runs, we know our offense can get them back," said Phillips after the game. "We can put up a lot of numbers."

Going into the championship game today at 1 p.m., the Eagles are confident.

"We've got enough pitching to play every day," said Halloran, the team's All-State catcher. "Our pitchers throw strikes and hold people down."

Miller, who played at Gustavus Adolphus College this spring, is back for his last year of Legion.

"When Eden Prairie won the high school championship this spring, I wasn't on the team, so this is my chance for a state title," he said.

To win state, Eden Prairie will have a tough opponent today, no matter if it's Eagan or Excelsior. Eden Prairie has a tradition of winning at the state level. The team was runner-up in the State Legion Tournament in 2008 and won the state title the four previous years.

Eden Prairie suffered a bitter blow last



Out at third

Tommy Lundquist of Excelsior eats some dirt, but is out by an eyelash as Eden Prairie's Matt Lintner puts on the tag in the final game of Saturday's action at Al Nyberg Field.

summer when Wayzata upset the Eagles in the 10th District Tournament.

Eden Prairie came back with a vengeance this spring, winning the state Class AAA high school title. Many of the players on that team are playing summer

ball with the Legion team, and head high school coach Mike Halloran is assisting Legion head coach Scott Hackett this summer.

Nothing is for sure, but Eden Prairie is in the driver's seat for the final day.

Ron Adams reaches 500 wins

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NSP leadoff man Willie Faust said, "Ron is definitely a player's coach. It's a lot of fun playing for him."

NSP shortstop Joe Rubbelke said, "Ron's a great guy to be around. He always has a way to lighten the mood. And he has taught me so much about the game in the three years I've played for him. We were all pretty excited when he won his 500th game."

What about Adams' coaching style?

"When someone makes a mistake, he never makes a scene," said Rubbelke. "He calls them aside and discusses it."

Adams took a few minutes to talk about his coaching style after the Fergus Falls game.

But first, he took a few seconds to praise his opponent.

"Fergus Falls is a nice ballclub," he said. "I was impressed by the way they

swung the bats ... they put the ball in play. Our fortes are pitching and defense. Look at what happened out here. We put a ninth-grader, Luke Henke, on the mound, and he pitches a complete game. How do you coach that?"

Adams said a coaching style comes with age and experience.

"I have changed some over the years," he said. "I try to have fun with the game. If you dwell on the negative, negative thoughts will remain. I love these kids, and I guess I'm still a kid at heart."

One of the keys to North St. Paul's success is consistent coaching. For all 24 of his seasons, Adams has been assisted by Bob Horner and Jeff Motz. Even the bus driver is a lifer. Ken Wieken has been at the wheel the last 18 years.

When we finally retire, we'll probably go out together," said Adams.

Until then, let the good times roll.

Line scores, summaries from Saturday

Game 25

Fergus Falls 000 001 002 3 6 0

North St. Paul 101 040 01x 7 13 1

Stanislawski, Viger (6) and Lee. Henke and Bruchu. WP Henke. LP Stanislawski. Home runs: Bruchu, North St. Paul and Robbie Youngdahl, North St. Paul.

Coach Ron Adams of North St. Paul called on ninth-grader Luke Henke to pitch an elimination game against Fergus Falls Saturday morning at Hibbing's Al Nyberg Field. Henke responded with a complete game, allowing only six hits in the process. Catcher Dave Bruchu helped out on the offensive side with two singles, a home run and two RBI. Robbie Youngdahl also had a home run for the winners and Joe Rubbelke missed the cycle by one stroke with a single, double and triple. Spencer Kidder had two singles for Fergus Falls.

Game 26

Eastview 000 000 100 1 6 3

Eagan 000 004 00x 4 7 0

Daly, Voss (4), Moose (8) and M. Decovich. Mathiason, Baska (7), Kunik (8) and Dorgan. WP Mathiason. LP Voss. Home run: Zenner, Eagan.

Zach Zenner's three-run homer in the bottom of the sixth inning lifted the Eagan Patriots over Eastview Saturday afternoon at Hibbing's Al Nyberg Field. Catcher J.D. Dorgan added two hits for Eagan. Alec DesLauriers-Knop of Eastview had two hits. Eastview played spectacular infield defense with three double plays in the first three innings. Neal Kunik, who already has one win in the State Legion Tournament, recorded the save against Eastview.

Game 27

North St. Paul 300 100 120 7 16 6

Eagan 071 240 00x 14 15 0

Conners, Toninato (2), Brestler (5) and Bruchu. Gibis, Dietrich (5) and Dorgan. Home runs: Dorgan, Eagan and Bodeker, Eagan.

Eagan went deep twice to defeat North St. Paul in an elimination game at Al Nyberg Field in Hibbing Saturday afternoon. Tommy Bodeker and J.D. Dorgan hit home runs. Louis LaChapelle went four-for-five at the plate. Joe Rubbelke went four-for-four for North St. Paul and Rob Youngdahl added four hits including a homer. Willie Faust added a homer for NSP.

Game 28

Excelsior 100 000 020 3 9 3

Eden Prairie 421 120 02x 12 18 2

Weber, Sand (2), Martin (4), Nelson (8) and Burger, Twenge (5). Phillips and Halloran. WP Phillips. LP Weber. Home run: Miller, Eden Prairie and Skjefte, Eden Prairie.

Eden Prairie's 18-hit barrage was too much for Excelsior in the winners' bracket final at Al Nyberg Field in Hibbing. Eden Prairie started fast with four runs in the bottom of the first to take a 4-1 lead. Tim Miller and Tony Skjefte had home runs for EP and catcher Matt Halloran went three-for-four. Blake Schmit also had three hits for EP. Brian Joe led Excelsior with two hits.

Stars of the Day

Luke Henke of North St. Paul pitched a complete game to eliminate Fergus Falls 7-3 in elimination Saturday morning in Hibbing.

Dave Bruchu homered and added two singles in North St. Paul's victory over Fergus Falls.

Joe Rubbelke was busy with the bat during North St. Paul's victory over Fergus Falls. He finished with a single, a double and a triple.

Spencer Kidder, the cleanup hitter from Fergus Falls, completed an outstanding tournament with two hits in his

team's loss to North St. Paul.

Taylor Mathiason pitched 6 and 2/3 innings to help Eagan defeat Eastview 4-1 in an elimination game Saturday afternoon in Hibbing.

Zach Zenner smashed a three-run homer in the seventh inning to lift Eagan over Eastview.

Alec DesLauriers-Knop led Eastview with three hits in the Thunder's 4-1 loss to Eagan Saturday afternoon.

Louie LaChapelle of Eagan was dom-

inant in the leadoff spot as his team downed North St. Paul 14-7 in an elimination game.

J.D. Dorgan of Eagan hit his second home run of the tourney in his team's victory over North St. Paul. He was two-for-three with four RBI.

Tim Miller, Eden Prairie's leadoff batter, hit a two-run homer Saturday night in his team's win over Excelsior.

Caleb Phillips put Eden Prairie in Sunday's championship game with a clutch pitching performance in the winners' bracket final against Excelsior.