



American Legion Minnesota Division I Tournament

Gazette



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Six teams fight on for title

In day two of the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Division I Tournament at Eden Prairie, six teams advanced in the double-elimination tournament.

Eden Prairie and Sauk Rapids stayed undefeated and advanced to the evening game Sunday at Round Lake Stadium in Eden Prairie. In the losers' bracket, Osseo, Hopkins, Lino Lakes Centennial, and Lakeville North will battle it out in the first three games Sunday.

Minnesota will send the top two teams to an American Legion National Regional in Dickinson, N.D., beginning Aug. 4.

Eliminated today were New Ulm Gold, Albert Lea, Minneapolis Southwest, Eastview and Fergus Falls.

In the late games Saturday at Round Lake Stadium between the undefeated teams, Sauk Rapids survived an 11-run rally in the sixth to defeat Hermantown 14-11 and Eden Prairie beat Osseo 18-5. Sauk Rapids is the Cinderella team of the tournament, having received only

one vote in the final poll of Legion teams.

There will be four games Sunday, all at Round Lake Stadium. In the loser's bracket, Hopkins will play Hermantown at 10 a.m., and Ossio will play Lino Lakes at 1 p.m.

The winners of those games will face off in the 4 p.m. game. The Eden Prairie vs. Sauk

Rapids game will be at 7.

In the Division II tourney being played at Ely, Eden Valley-Watkins won the championship with a 15-3 victory over host Ely. In the third place game, La Crescent defeated Luverne 7-6. Matt Geislinger of EV-W was the tourney's outstanding player.

Who are these guys anyway?

By John Sherman

After winning their first three State American Legion Baseball Tournament games, the boys from Sauk Rapids were on top of the world.

"We came here and hit the ground running," said first baseman Adam Wippler. "It has been amazing so far."

"We've been playing together since we were 12 or 13," said outfielder Nate Gwost. "We went to a couple of AABC World Series in

Battle Creek, Mich. And Rockford, Ill. That experience is definitely helping us now."

In one of the most exciting games of the state tourney Saturday at Round Lake Stadium, Sauk Rapids beat Hermantown 14-11. Hermantown scored all 11 of its runs in the top of the sixth inning. For the other eight innings, Sauk Rapids was putting up goose eggs.

Joel Haller went five-for-six and scored three runs for Sauk Rapids while Nate Gwost

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Stars of the Day

Austin Malinowski of Lino Lakes (Centennial) pitched 6 and 2/3 innings of no-hit ball and hit a three-run homer in a 5-3 victory over Eastview.

Stu Daly hit a two-run homer in the bottom of the ninth inning for Eastview in a 5-1 loss to Lino Lakes (Centennial).

Kyle Dalton of Hopkins had two RBI in the Flyers' 3-2 victory over Albert Lea in an elimination game.

Jay Homan of Hopkins pitched seven solid innings to beat Albert Lea 3-2.

Zach Hoffmann of New Ulm Gold hit a three-RBI double in a 12-2 victory over Minneapolis Southwest.

Erich Prokosch hit a two-run homer over

the center-field fence in New Ulm Gold's 12-2 victory over Minneapolis Southwest.

Aaron Gingerich went three-for-three at the plate as the Hopkins Legion team stayed alive in the losers' bracket with a 12-11 win over New Ulm Gold.

Tyler Peterson of Eden Prairie hit his third home run of the State Tournament in an 18-5 victory over Osseo in the winners' bracket Saturday night.

Ryan Maenke had three hits, including a homer, and drove in three runs as Eden Prairie defeated Osseo 18-5.

Evan Cordell of Lakeville North had four hits, including a double and a home run, in an 11-10 loss to Centennial Saturday.



Sauk Rapids pitcher R.J. Cervenka delivers a pitch in the 6th inning.

Kalata earns respect and a spot in the Legion Hall of Fame

By John Sherman

Gail Kalata, Minnesota American Legion Baseball's No. 1 ambassador and webmaster extraordinaire, was inducted into the State Legion Baseball Hall of Fame during the pre-tournament banquet Thursday evening at the Marriott West Hotel.

Volunteering to help American Legion Baseball is a way of life for the St. Paul resident.

"As my reputation as that Legion Baseball lady grew throughout the state, my volunteer work for Legion Baseball continued to expand," Gail said recently.

How did she get started?

Gail followed Tri-City Red on its World Series championship run in 1999, and as a way to thank the Tri-City Red Post and the Legion team, she began crafting a website for the post, which is located in New Brighton.

"At the time, little information about Legion Baseball was available on the Internet," Gail recalled. "I included information on Minnesota State Tournament winners, outstanding player awards and other information, hoping to build interest in Legion Baseball and give due praise to all past and present player accomplishments."

"Legion Baseball content on my website has grown exponentially from there," Gail continued. "The site is used extensively by college and major-league scouts, who are looking for tournaments and playoff schedules."

Gail noticed that there was a statewide American Legion Baseball poll, which was voted on weekly by coaches, former coaches, directors and the media. The poll got off to a good start, but fizzled in 2000.

"I was asked by Jim Peck [16-and-Under State American Legion Baseball Director], if I would administer the poll – and revive it – in 2001," Gail said. "I did so, and have continued to handle the poll each season since – never missing one week – and helping to stimulate interest in American Legion Baseball all across the nation."

In the fall of 2001, then State Legion Baseball Director George Karnas asked Gail if she would like to become an ambassador at the State Legion Tournament.

"I was always there anyway, so I think George figured I might as well join in and help," Gail said.

She not only showed up at the State Tournament, she excelled. Soon, thanks to Gail, there was a State Tournament website. The site now gets thousands of hits each year.

Gail also started a website for the Gopher Classic, an annual tournament, which brings Minnesota teams together with some of the best teams from other states.

Jim Peck, like Gail Kalata, a member of the State American Legion Baseball Hall of Fame, said that bringing Gail into the administrative



Super volunteer Gail Kalata earned a spot in the Hall of Fame this year.

end of the program was one of the best decisions the State Committee ever made.

"Gail is a tireless worker and a great supporter of American Legion Baseball," Peck said. "You can give her any project and she will do a great job with it. She's an integral part of making the program better."

State Legion Baseball Director Darwin Berg echoed Peck's comments. "I don't know where Gail gets the energy. I see e-mails that come from her in the middle of the night – and it's all baseball, and all for the good of American Legion Baseball. She's in love with

Sauk Rapids

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went three-for-six with two doubles. Outfielder Jason Hoppe added three hits.

Hermantown had two runners on base in the ninth inning when Joe Muench hit a deep drive to right field.

Blake Phenow, a reserve outfielder for Sauk Rapids, had his moment in the sun as he raced back toward the fence and made a spectacular diving catch. Afterward, he jumped three feet in the air and ran to the infield to celebrate with teammates.

"I heard Nate [Gwost] yell, back," said Phenow. "I started running, got my glove up and the rest of what happened is a blur. It was the best catch I've ever made, by far. I was just happy to be in the game in that situation."

"Hermantown's fans kept them in the game, especially in the sixth inning when they scored all those runs," said Hoppe, who is Sauk Rapids' only college freshman. He pitched for Minnesota State, Mankato this spring.

So what are Sauk Rapids' chances as they move into the final two days of State

the game and everything she does is enthusiastic. Gail makes my job a lot easier. She was invaluable in helping us set up the electronic registration process that we started in 2010. Gail knows the process inside and out and has helped many coaches with it."

Gail also works tirelessly as a volunteer for Fourth District American Legion Baseball, which includes teams in Ramsey County. "It is almost a full-time job just keeping Ronnie Adams of North St. Paul in check," Gail said with a smile.

Tournament play?

"The way we look at it, anybody can beat anybody," said Hoppe.

If anyone needs evidence of that look at what happened the first day when Sauk Rapids defeated Burnsville 4-2 with Hoppe on the mound. That might have been the upset of the year in Minnesota Legion Baseball. Burnsville had 124 points in the final State American Legion Baseball poll and Sauk Rapids had exactly 1 point. That just reinforces Hoppe's point. Indeed, when you get to this point in the season, "anybody can beat anybody."

Sauk Rapids is 24-5, thanks to strong pitching performances from Hoppe (7-1), Ethan Prow (5-1) and Brett DeGagne (6-0). Adam Wippler led the team in hitting coming into the state tourney with a .476 average. Second baseman Mitch Gwost was hitting .404 and catcher Erik Bjork and Hoppe were both hitting .391. Sauk Rapids' team average is a robust .362.

The Sauk Rapids players might not be household names in the Twin Cities, but in three games at state they've proved to everyone that they know how to play the game.

Twins' draftee Malinowski does in all for Lino Lakes Centennial

By John Sherman

Every year at the State American Legion Tournament, there seems to be one player that everyone is watching.

Fans and scouts alike have been keeping close tabs on Lino Lakes (Centennial) pitcher Austin Malinowski this week, and so far he hasn't disappointed.

During a 5-3 victory over Eastview in the losers' bracket Saturday, Malinowski pitched 6 and 2/3 innings of no-hit ball, hit a three-run homer and even made a sliding catch in right field in the ninth inning to help preserve the victory.

He was unable to complete the no-hitter for two reasons. His coaches were preserving innings for subsequent games and his pitch count was rising fast.

"I was a little bit wild, but my backdoor curveball was working," said Malinowski after the game.

The 6-foot-5 left-hander, who has been drafted by the Minnesota Twins, delivers a fastball that has consistently been clocked at 92-93 miles per hour. His speed caught the attention of the University of Arizona coaching staff, and he's headed there on scholarship in the fall.

Malinowski probably won't swing the bat much in college, considering his future is primarily as a pitcher, but he sure swung the bat well on Saturday.

"I hit that three-run homer on a fastball that was a little bit up in the zone," said Malinowski. "It was nice that the wind was blowing out."

As for the sliding catch in right field, Malinowski said, "I haven't played outfield all

year ... I was happy I could make a catch like that."

Lino Lakes (Centennial) relies on Malinowski, but is far from a one-man team. Simon Knockel pitched the last 2 and 1/3 innings and also had two hits to spark the offense. Adam LaMere and Alexander Marolt also had two hits apiece.

Eastview didn't quit. Trailing 5-0 going into the ninth inning, the Thunder scored three runs, two of them on a homer by Stu Daly. In the final analysis, Eastview did all it could to catch up, but Centennial had too big a lead and too much Malinowski.



KYLE DALTON

Dalton wins scholarship

By John Sherman

There were two outs in the top of the ninth inning Saturday morning with Hopkins in the field, holding a 3-2 lead over Albert Lea.

Albert Lea runners occupied all three bases, and Hopkins relief pitcher Aaron Gingerich was in a peck of trouble. But Gingerich had an ace in hole.

He threw a low pitch that was hit on the ground to Hopkins second baseman Kyle Dalton. To make sure there was no chance for a miscue, Dalton dropped to one knee and fielded the ball cleanly. His flip to first base ended the ballgame.

"Sometimes, when you're in the field, you kind of have the feeling that the ball is coming to you," said Dalton. "And then it comes to you."

Dalton played a major role in Hopkins' victory. In addition to making the final play, he had two RBI. Teammates Joey Brettingen, Matt Sinderson and Andy Wicklund each had two hits. Gingerich saved the pitching win for starter Jay Homan.

Hopkins is a team wins with fundamentals, and Dalton is a stickler for doing things the right way.

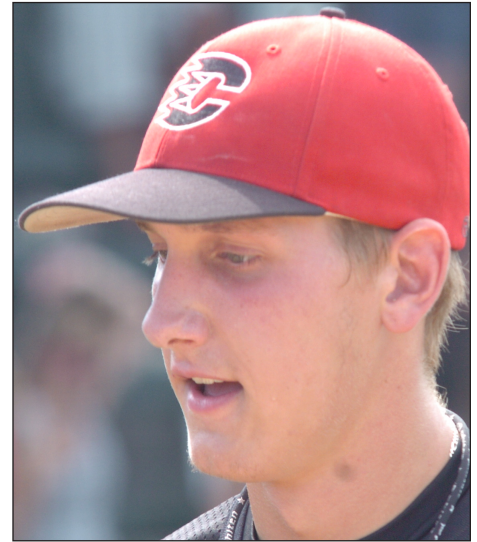
"Kyle is an awesome hitter and all-around player," said Hopkins shortstop Andy Wicklund. "I have learned a lot playing with him. Kyle always seems to be in the right spot."

That carries over to what Dalton does off the field. At the state tournament banquet, he was awarded the statewide American Legion Baseball Scholarship for 2011. Dalton will apply the \$500 scholarship to his expenses at Concordia University in St. Paul.

"Move-in day is in late August and we'll start fall baseball Sept. 8," said Dalton. "I am looking forward to playing ball at Concordia."

Dalton said he enjoyed writing the essay that accompanied his Legion Baseball Scholarship application.

"I wrote about how baseball has taught me life lessons," he said.



AUSTIN MALINOWSKI



Lino Lakes Centennial's Austin Malinowski connects for a three-run homer vs. Eastview in a 5-3 victory.

Game summaries for Day Two

Game 17

New Ulm Gold 006 004 2 12 9 0

Mpls. Southwest 000 110 0 2 6 2

Blackstad, Bock (6) and Shaul. Ferguson, McGrath (6) and Hupp. WP Blackstad. LP Ferguson. Home run: Prokosch (New Ulm Gold).

New Ulm Gold won its elimination with Minneapolis Southwest Saturday morning at Eden Prairie's Round Lake Stadium. Daniel Blackstad was sharp on the mound for New Ulm Gold, as was reliever Patrick Bock, who retired all six batters he faced. First baseman Erich Prokosch hit a home run to spark New Ulm's offense while Zach Hoffmann and Drew Pfaff each had two hits. Nick Kuhlmann led Southwest with two hits.

Game 18

Albert Lea 000 000 020 2 6 2

Hopkins 011 000 10x 3 10 2

Sorenson and Klatt. Homan, Gingerich (8) and Sinderson. WP Homan. LP Sorenson.

Hopkins played old-time ball, executing two perfect hit-and-run plays in its win over Albert Lea. Kyle Dalton drove in two runs for the winners

while teammates Joey Brettingen, Matt Sinderson and Andy Wicklund had two hits each. Jay Homan pitched the win for Hopkins and Aaron

Gingerich picked up the save. Cole Sorenson pitched a complete game for Albert Lea. Cody Haaland, Tyler Woodside and Dylan See-Rockers each had two hits for Albert Lea.

Game 19

Centennial 004 000 100 5 11 1

Eastview 000 000 003 3 5 2

Malinowski, Knockel (7) and Kallevig. Knop, Jerle (7) and M. DeCovich. WP Malinowski. LP Knop. Home runs: Malinowski (Centennial), Daly (Eastview).

Austin Malinowski was the winning pitcher and hit a three-run homer for Centennial. Stu Daly countered with a two-run homer in the bottom of the ninth inning for Eastview. Knockel, Alexander Marolt and Adam LaMere each had two hits for Centennial. Catcher Matt DeCovich had two hits for Eastview.

Game 20

Fergus Falls 000 012 000 3 10 1

Lakeville North 000 001 012 4 11 2

Rengel and Lee. Klinkhammer, Jacobson (8) and Streit. WP Jacobson. LP Rengel.

Lakeville North scored two runs in the bottom of the ninth to stay alive in the tournament. Alex Hanneman, Brandon Morgan and Evan Cordell had hits for Lakeville North in the bottom of the ninth. Cordell and Travis Evanson each had three hits for Lakeville North. Dan Revering had two hits and two RBI for Fergus Falls.

Game 21

New Ulm 103 005 200 11 10 5

Hopkins 010 460 000 12 16 6

Dove, Bock (4), Wendinger (5) and Shaul. Ellis, Dale (6), Sinderson (9) and Gingerich. WP Dale. LP Bock.

Hopkins eliminated New Ulm Gold in a game Saturday afternoon at Miller Park. Andy Wicklund, Michael Larson and Matt Sinderson had two RBI each for Hopkins and Aaron Gingerich had three. Gingerich and Kyle Dalton had three hits each. Colton Petron drove in four runs for New Ulm Gold.

Game 22

Lakeville North 002 210 122 10 17 4

Centennial 101 400 212 11 15 3

Jacobson, Brekke (4), Alexander (6), Moore (9) and Streit. Fidler, Reese (5), Kallevig (9) and Irlbeck. WP Kallevig. LP Moore.

Centennial scored two runs in the last of the ninth inning to advance in the losers' bracket. Adam LaMere drove home his brother Benny LaMere with the winning run. Simon Knockel went three-for-six with four RBI for Centennial. Lakeville's top hitter was Evan Kordell, who went four-for-six with two stolen bases.

Game 23

Hermantown 000 00(11) 000 11 13 3

Sauk Rapids 301 240 22x 14 17 3

M. Stocke, Folman (5) and Baker. Chapa, Cervenka (6), Prow (6) and Bjork. WP Prow. LP Folman.

In a wild winners' bracket game at Eden Prairie's Round Lake Stadium, Sauk Rapids defeated Hermantown. Aside from one glorious Hermantown inning, the game belonged to Sauk Rapids. But in that one inning (the sixth), Hermantown scored 11 runs to take a one-run lead. Third baseman Joel Haller went five-for-six for Sauk Rapids and Jason Hoppe went three-for-four. Nate Gwost had four RBI. Shortstop Jared Thomas had four RBI to lead Hermantown.

Game 24

Eden Prairie 632 033 1 18 20 3

Osseo 021 020 0 5 7 2

Mingo, Frederick (6) and Blasy. Stroh, Wagner (2), Stromback (6) and Lursen. WP Mingo. LP Stroh. Home runs: Schmit (Eden Prairie), Blasy (Eden Prairie), Peterson (Eden Prairie), Maenke (Eden Prairie), Thonvold (Eden Prairie).

Eden Prairie's win over Osseo included five home runs and a total of 20 hits. Tyler Peterson of EP hit his third homer of the tournament. Also dialing long distance were Danny Blasy, Blake Schmit, Lance Thonvold and Ryan Maenke.