



American Legion Minnesota Division I Tournament

Gazette



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EP, Centennial, Sauk Rapids still in it

At the end of the day, three teams remained in the hunt for Minnesota American Legion Division I championship.

Sauk Rapids, Centennial and Sauk Rapids advanced.

Eden Prairie earned a spot in the championship game by sweeping through the first

three days of the double elimination tournament without a loss. In the late game on Thursday night, Eden Prairie defeated Sauk Rapids, the surprise entrant in the final three contenders, by a score of 10-5.

Eden Prairie, showing the form that led them to to a runner up finish at last year's

American Legion World Series, has outscored its opponents 53-13 in four games thus far.

Eden Prairie will play in the championship game at 1 p.m. at Round Lake Stadium. In the 10 a.m. game, Sauk Rapids will play Centennial for a chance to advance.

Eden Prairie also earned a chance to represent Minnesota in the National Regional tourney that begins Aug. 4 in Dickinson, N.D. The 10 a.m. game will determine Minnesota's other representative.

The World Series will be held in Shelby, N.C., beginning Aug. 12.

In action earlier on Sunday, Hermantown defeated Hopkins 12-11 by scoring in the bottom of the ninth. Centennial then topped Osseo 14-2 to advance in the losers' bracket.

In the third game, Lino Lakes Centennial edged Hermantown 8-7.

The tournament awards presentation will be immediately following the championship game today.

Home crowd goes home happy

By John Sherman

Sauk Rapids, the Cinderella team of the 2011 State American Legion Baseball Tournament, couldn't make the glass slipper fit in a 10-5 loss to Eden Prairie in the winners' bracket final Sunday night at Round Lake Park Stadium.

Eden Prairie was dominant in winning its fourth straight game at State. The host team outhit Sauk Rapids 14-5 and had only one miscue in the field.

Second baseman Tony Skjefte hammered a long home run and went four-for-five with four RBI in his best tournament game to date. Teammate Ryan Maenke, who plays third base, went three-for-five. Blake Schmit, David Belusky and Danny Blasy added two hits apiece for the winners.

Skjefte talked about his home run after the game.

"I was looking for a fastball on the first

Continued on Page 2



Lance Thonvold of Eden Prairie connects against Sauk Rapids.

Stars of the Day

Billy Gregg of Hopkins hit a home run over the center-field fence to tie the score 11-11 in a 12-11 loss to Hermantown Sunday morning at Round Lake Stadium.

Joey Brettingen of Hopkins had four hits and four RBI in the Flyers' loss to Hermantown.

Mike Swartz singled home the winning run in the bottom of the ninth inning as Hermantown stayed alive with a 12-11 victory over Hopkins.

Austin Malinowski had three hits, including a double, in Centennial's 14-2 victory over Osseo. He has now scored 11 runs in the tournament.

Steven Piette pitched four-hit ball over

five innings and also hit a triple as Centennial eliminated Osseo.

Alexander Marolt hit the only home run of the game in Centennial's 14-2 victory over Osseo.

Tony Skjefte swung a hot bat in Eden Prairie's 10-5 win over Sauk Rapids. He finished the game four-for-five with a home run and four RBI.

Ryan Maenke of Eden Prairie had three hits to give the offense a boost in the win over Sauk Rapids.

Lance Thonvold struck out the side in the eighth inning and retired three of four men in the ninth to close out the win over Sauk Rapids.

For local committee, tourney is culmination of months of work

By John Sherman

When Eden Prairie was awarded the 2011 State American Legion Baseball Tournament 18 months ago, co-chairs Stacy Skjefte and Bob Buteyn couldn't wait to get started.

This week's State Tournament is the results of months of hard work and preparation. And it represents the work of many volunteers.

"So many people in the community went above and beyond the call of duty to make it happen," Bob said in an interview Sunday.

"American Legion Baseball gets in your blood," said Stacy, who has watched her sons Luke (2007) and Tony (2010) represent Eden Prairie in the American Legion World Series. "It is such an honor for me and my family to be involved in American Legion Baseball and the Eden Prairie Baseball Association [EPBA]."

"It is an honor for me to be entrusted to co-chair this tournament," said Bob. "I took my son to tee ball for the first time when he was 5 years old. Now he's 25 and he's one of the coaches for the American Legion team. I've gotten more out of the program than I could ever put into it."

When they formed the committee and the various subcommittees for the State Legion Tournament, Stacy and Bob enlisted the help of trusted friends in the community. Linda Peterson, mother of Eden Prairie Legion first baseman Tyler Peterson, served as chairman of the tournament program subcommittee. Chelle Grunewald served as banquet chair. Scott Soderberg led the concessions effort and Dave Miller coordinated scorers and announcers.

Mari Bray, mother of EP pitcher Adam Bray, was the official photographer for the tourney took photos of all 16 qualifying teams.

State American Legion Baseball Director Darwin Berg is pleased with Eden Prairie's performance as the host community. "You could see there was a lot of planning involved in the tournament," he noted. "The people we've worked most closely with, Stacy and Bob, are always available, always willing to help."

Darwin said cooperation and efficiency were not limited to the co-directors.

"The Marriott Hotel was very accommodating," he said. "We've been happy with the fields and the grounds crew has been great. The banquet was a gala affair. In my time, it's the largest banquet we have ever had for an American Legion Baseball State Tournament. And it came off without a hitch."

"My expectation was to have the best banquet and the best state tournament we could possibly have," said Stacy. "Our volunteers are the reason we have been successful this week. We have great people working on the tournament."

In addition to the volunteers, the host committee is grateful to 36 sponsors that have stepped up to the plate with financial support.

When EP first baseman Tyler Peterson saw



Co-chairs Bob Buteyn and Stacy Skjefte have headed the Eden Prairie host committee that put on this year's Legion tourney.

Stacy at the end of the tournament banquet, he praised her and asked, "What can we do to repay you?"

"Just win," said Stacy.

If Eden Prairie finishes first or second in the State Tournament, Stacy will go on the road with the team and other EP parents for the regional in Dickinson, N.D. Aug. 4-8.

When she isn't volunteering for Legion Baseball, Stacy is an account executive for Cigna Health Care.

Bob manages a warehouse for American Paper Supply when he isn't at the ball field.

There is a lot of volunteerism behind the scenes that most people don't see. Bob has done a lot of work on the Eden Prairie High School Baseball Field, which was used as one

of four tournament fields.

"One Sunday, the grounds crew saw Bob up at the high school field and wondered why he was pulling weeds," said Stacy.

Speaking of the grounds crew, the tournament would not be running smoothly without their efforts.

"The goal was to make the fields perfect," said Stacy.

"A facility like Round Lake Stadium gives us the chance to do a tournament like this with confidence," said Bob. "This is year 3 for the stadium."

"The American Legion team and all of the teams in the Eden Prairie Baseball Association take pride in playing at Round Lake Stadium," Stacy added.

Home crowd happy

Continued from Page 1

pitch, and I jumped on one," he said.

Skjefte was quick to take the emphasis off of himself and put it on the team.

"We all go up there to hit with a good approach," he said. "And we've been executing well. We're solid throughout the lineup ... and we have a little bit more power than we had last year. We hit 28 home runs [in 2010] and we have 45 this year."

Maenke has had two great games in a row at the plate, according to EP head coach Scott Hackett.

"Ryan is swinging a hot bat," said Hackett. "Different guys are stepping up every game. I feel comfortable with everyone in the batting order, and we also have guys coming off the bench who can swing the bat."

"I saw a lot of fastballs tonight," said

Maenke. "I tried to go the opposite way, and I had two hits to the left side."

Thonvold, a two-way player who is equally solid as a pitcher and a hitter, closed Sunday night's game in style. He fanned the side in the top of the eighth inning and retired three of four Sauk Rapids hitters in the ninth.

"A lot of guys are stepping up for us right now," he said. "Everyone comes to do his job ... we have a lot of depth on the pitching staff and throughout the lineup, 1-9."

Coach Hackett complimented Sauk Rapids. "They come to battle," he said. "And they can swing it. I knew we had to be ready on the mound. They got a few hits, but we did a good job of minimizing their opportunities."

Eden Prairie, which was ranked No. 1 in the final Legion State poll, is on the verge of showing everyone that the rankings were correct.

Complete stats from tourney's first three days

Batting avg

1.	Dean Stier-WILL	.667
2.	Nick Elemes-MG	.625
3.	Ryan Maenke-EP	.600
4.	Kevin Folman-HERM	.565
5.	Tyler Peterson-EP	.563
6.	Joel Haller-SR	.556
7.	Jason Hoppe-SR	.538
8.	Jason Shaul-NUG	.533
9.	Travis Evanson-LN	.529
	Aaron Pfaff-NUG	.529

Runs scored

1.	Austin Malinowski-LL	11
2.	Benjamin LaMere-LL	10
	Kevin Folman-HERM	10
4.	Blake Schmit-EP	9
5.	Anthony Skjefte-EP	8
	Ryan Maenke-EP	8
	Kevin Larson-NUG	8
8.	5 tied at ...	7

Slugging pct

1.	Tyler Peterson-EP	1.125
2.	Travis Evanson-LN	1.000
	Jason Hoppe-SR	1.000
	Sam Christofferson-OSSEO	1.000
	Dean Stier-WILL	1.000
6.	Ryan Maenke-EP	.933
7.	Tyler Ruemmele-EP	.909
8.	Anthony Skjefte-EP	.875
	Stuart Daly-EASTV	.875
10.	Blake Schmit-EP	.769

Hits

1.	Kevin Folman-HERM	13
2.	Samuel Alt-LL	11
3.	Adam LaMere-LL	10
	Benjamin LaMere-LL	10
	Joey Brettingen-HOP	10
	Matt Sinderson-HOP	10
7.	9 tied at ...	9

On base pct

1.	Dean Stier-WILL	.714
2.	Sam Christofferson-OSSEO	.667
	Nick Elemes-MG	.667
4.	Jason Hoppe-SR	.650
5.	Jason Shaul-NUG	.632
6.	Ryan Maenke-EP	.625
	Matthew Contreras-OSSEO	.625
8.	Kevin Folman-HERM	.615
9.	Tyler Peterson-EP	.611
10.	Aaron Pfaff-NUG	.600

Runs batted in

1.	Tyler Peterson-EP	12
2.	Jared Thomas-HERM	11
3.	Zachary Hoffmann-NUG	10
4.	Austin Malinowski-LL	9
5.	Aaron Pfaff-NUG	8
6.	Samuel Alt-LL	7
	Jason Hoppe-SR	7
	Alexander Marolt-LL	7
9.	10 tied at ...	6

Home runs

1.	Tyler Peterson-EP	3
2.	Travis Evanson-LN	2
3.	19 tied at ...	1

Doubles

1.	Zachary Hoffmann-NUG	4
	Benjamin LaMere-LL	4
	Nate Gwost-SR	4
	Samuel Alt-LL	4
	Austin Malinowski-LL	4
6.	Jason Shaul-NUG	3
	Alex Hanneman-LN	3
	Jared Thomas-HERM	3
	Anthony Skjefte-EP	3
	Jason Hoppe-SR	3

Triples

1.	Eric Bjork-SR	2
2.	11 tied at ...	1

Total bases

1.	Tyler Peterson-EP	18
	Austin Malinowski-LL	18
3.	Travis Evanson-LN	17
4.	Kevin Folman-HERM	15
	Samuel Alt-LL	15
6.	Jared Thomas-HERM	14
	Anthony Skjefte-EP	14
	Ryan Maenke-EP	14
	Benjamin LaMere-LL	14
10.	3 tied at ...	13

Earned run avg

1.	Austin Malinowski-LL	0.00
	Thomas Jerle-EASTV	0.00
	Anthony King-Foreman-EP	0.00
4.	Steven Piette-LL	0.75
5.	Jason Hoppe-SR	1.00
	Trent Baker-BEM	1.00
	Sam Windle-OSSEO	1.00
8.	Tim Shannon-HOP	1.29
	Brett DeGagne-SR	1.29
	Benjamin LaMere-LL	1.29

Batters struck out

1.	Sam Windle-OSSEO	11
2.	Quinn Johnson-BURN	10
3.	Alex Moore-LN	9
	Austin Malinowski-LL	9
5.	Zach Rengel-FF	8
	Jordan Jacobson-LN	8
7.	8 tied at ...	7

Saves

1.	Jordan Jacobson-LN	1
	Aaron Gingerich-HOP	1
	Evan DeCovich-EASTV	1
	Benjamin LaMere-LL	1
	Lance Thornvold-EP	1

Opposing bat avg

1.	Austin Malinowski-LL	.000
2.	Anthony King-Foreman-EP	.063
3.	Aaron Klatt-AL	.138
4.	Benjamin LaMere-LL	.160
	Jay Homan-HOP	.160
6.	Sam Windle-OSSEO	.176

7.	Jordan Smith-EP	.190
8.	Steven Piette-LL	.196
9.	Darin Stanislawski-FF	.200
10.	Tim Shannon-HOP	.207

Appearances

1.	Jordan Jacobson-LN	3
	Aaron Gingerich-HOP	3
	Kevin Stocke-HERM	3
	Rj Cervenka-SR	3
	Corey Faiad-LL	3
	Michael Stocke-HERM	3
	Joel Klinkhammer-LN	3
8.	18 tied at ...	2

Innings pitched

1.	Steven Piette-LL	12.0
2.	Colin Wendinger-NUG	10.2
3.	Joel Klinkhammer-LN	10.1
	Zach Rengel-FF	10.1
5.	Kevin Stocke-HERM	10.0
	Cole Baker-MSW	10.0
	Jack Hamilton-HOP	10.0
8.	6 tied at ...	9.0

Wins

1.	Corey Faiad-LL	2
2.	26 tied at ...	1

Games started

1.	Steven Piette-LL	2
2.	54 tied at ...	1

Team Batting avg

1.	Eden Prairie	.420
2.	Hopkins	.337
3.	Lino Lakes (Cent.)	.336
4.	New Ulm Gold	.315
5.	Osseo	.314
6.	Hermantown	.309
	Maplewood Green	.309
8.	Lakeville North	.308
9.	Fergus Falls	.302
10.	Sauk Rapids	.290

Team Slugging pct

1.	Eden Prairie	.703
2.	Lino Lakes (Cent.)	.450
3.	Eastview	.443
4.	Lakeville North	.434
5.	Sauk Rapids	.428
6.	Osseo	.421
7.	New Ulm Gold	.416
8.	Hopkins	.400
9.	Fergus Falls	.388
10.	Hermantown	.363

Team Earned run avg

1.	Eden Prairie	3.60
2.	Lino Lakes (Cent.)	3.66
3.	Burnsville	3.78
4.	Hopkins	4.93
5.	Fergus Falls	5.13
6.	Sauk Rapids	5.40
7.	Bemidji	5.62
8.	New Ulm Gold	5.68
9.	Lakeville North	5.97
10.	Albert Lea	6.26

Game summaries for Day Three

Game 25

Hopkins 400 020 401 11 18 3

Hermantown 620 300 001 12 11 1

Sinderson, Price (4), Hamilton (9) and Gingerich. Muench, K. Stocke (7), M. Stocke (7), Folman (8) and Baker. WP Hamilton. Home run: Gregg (Hopkins).

Both teams came out swinging in an elimination game at Round Lake Stadium. Hopkins scored four runs in the top of the first and Hermantown answered with six runs in the bottom of the first. Hopkins trailed most of the game, but tied the score on Billy Gregg's long homer to dead center field. Jared Thomas had a home run for Hermantown and reliever Kevin Folman recorded the win on the mound. Joey Brettingen sparked Hopkins' offense with four hits and four RBI. Hopkins finished the season with a 24-19 record.

Game 26

Centennial 531 111 2 14 17 0

Osseo 000 002 0 2 6 6

Piette, Kosak (7) and Irlbeck. Gangstad, Contreras (3), B. Johnson (5) and Lursen. WP Piette. LP Gangstad. Home run: Marolt (Centennial).

Lino Lakes (Centennial) stayed alive in the losers' bracket at Round Lake Stadium. Centennial's attack featured 17 hits. Alexander Marolt had three of those hits, including a home run. Austin Malinowski also had three hits for Centennial. Winning pitcher Steven Piette helped his own cause by hitting a triple.

Game 27

Centennial 300 031 001 8 10 3

Hermantown 012 000 004 7 12 6

Reese, Faiad (5), B. LaMere (9) and Kallevig. K. Stocke and Baker, WP Faiad. LP K. Stocke.

Hermantown went down fighting with four runs in the bottom of the ninth in its loss to Centennial Sunday afternoon at Round Lake Stadium. Centennial mustered 10 hits, including two each by Adam LaMere, Steve Piette and Sam Alt. It was a big game for Alt, who drove in four runs. Kevin Folman banged three hits for Hermantown while Cody Baker and Jared Thomas added two each. Hermantown won three of its five State Tournament games. Centennial has now won five of six and moves into the final day of the tournament Monday.

Game 28

Sauk Rapids 000 203 000 5 5 4

Eden Prairie 005 300 02x 10 14 1

Swan, Haller (5), Cervinka (6) and Bjork. Smith, King-Foreman (6), Thonvold (8) and Blasy. WP Smith. LP Swan. Home run: Skjefte (Eden Prairie).

Eden Prairie's 14-hit attack was enough to defeat pesky Sauk Rapids in a battle of unbeaten teams Sunday night at Round Lake Park Stadium. Second baseman Tony Skjefte led the EP attack, going four-for-five with a homer and driving in four runs. Teammate Ryan Maenke was three-for-five and Lance Thonvold pitched two innings of scoreless relief to close off Sauk Rapids' chances. Jordan Smith allowed four hits in 5 and 2/3 innings to get the win on the mound.



Nicholaus Mueller, 12, became the newest member of the Tournament staff on Sunday when he was presented with his staff badge by his grandfather and Second District Director Dick Mueller, left, and State Director Darwin Berg. Nicholaus has been an invaluable asset to the tournament.



Hopkins Bill Greg smashes a home run in the top of the ninth to tie Hermantown 11-11. Hermantown scored one in the bottom of the final inning to win the game and advance.