



# American Legion Minnesota Division I Tournament

# Gazette



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## Anderson, Max talk of Legion Days

The American Legion Division I Baseball Tournament, held in Edina, began Thursday with a spectacular opening ceremony followed by a major league banquet.

The 86th annual tourney begins today with 16 games at four fields, pitting the top 16 teams in the state. Action will take place at Braemar Park in Edina and at fields in Chanhassen, Richfield and Eden Prairie.

The opening event at Braemar featured a bagpiper, a male chorus, the color guard from Chanhassen Post 580, and flyover of four World War II vintage planes.

All 16 teams participated across the outfield grass.

The banquet, attended by over 600 people, featured WCCO sports reporter Mike Max and University of Minnesota Coach John Anderson

as the featured speakers.

Earlier The American Legion Baseball Program awarded its annual honors. Entering the Hall of Fame were Bill Taunton Sr. and John Sherman.

Taunton, Willmar, longtime coach and umpire, included in his resume the fact that he brought about the ban of chewing tobacco from American Legion Baseball. Sherman, Minneapolis, recounted the tourney in 1987 when his team, St. Louis Park, won the state championship. In one game the team was behind 8-0 with five outs to go when it scored 15 runs.

Named Graduates of the Year were Cole Irish, a player from Plainview who became a college all star, and Jim Brower, who played for Excelsior and later won 33 games in the

Major Leagues.

Mike Fogelson of Bemidji was named Coach of the Year and Chaska Post 57 was named Post of the Year.

Max said baseball was something that gets inside you. "You choose baseball one time in your life, and after that it chooses you." He urged the players to give back to the sport.

Anderson, who has coached in the Big Ten for 32 years, first spoke of the history of American Legion Baseball in Minnesota and noted that the state has produced five national champions.

"It's strong evidence of the high level of quality in Minnesota baseball."

He said, though, that more than success on the field, the Legion teaches traditional values, sportsmanship, citizenship and leadership.

"Baseball is a game that is all about overcoming adversity, just like in life."

## Final poll has Burnsville on top

The story at the onset of this year's Division I State Tournament is partially about who didn't make the tourney.

Tri-City Red, Coon Rapids and Eagan, highly regarded throughout the season, did not survive the sub-state playdowns. Minnesota Legion Baseball this year went to a system of 15 zones rather than the traditional 10 districts.

But the field is strong, led by Burnsville and Excelsior in the final Legion baseball poll.

The top 20 in the last poll before the tourney included: (First place votes in parenthesis)

- 1. Burnsville (6) 127
- 2. Excelsior (7) 124
- 3. Eastview (1) 113
- 4. Eden Prairie (1) 106
- 5. Tri-City Red 78
- 6. Forest Lake 57
- 7. Coon Rapids 42
- 8. Grand Rapids 41
- 9. Cold Spring 36

- 10. Eagan 30
- 11. Edina 19
- 12. St. Cloud Chutes 11
- 13. Chester Bird (Benilde) 10
- 14. Rochester Patriots 7
- 15. Osseo 6
- 16. Alexandria 5
- 17. New Ulm Gold 4
- 18. Maple Grove 3
- 19. Chaska 2
- 20. Woodbury Blue 2

The tourney will run through the weekend with the championship games being played at Edina Braemar on Monday.

The winner will advance to the Central Plains Regional in Fargo with hopes of advancing to the World Series in Shelby, N.C.

The Division II Tournament, featuring some of the smaller schools in the state, also gets underway today in Bird Island.



Gopher Coach John Anderson recounted the history of Legion Baseball.