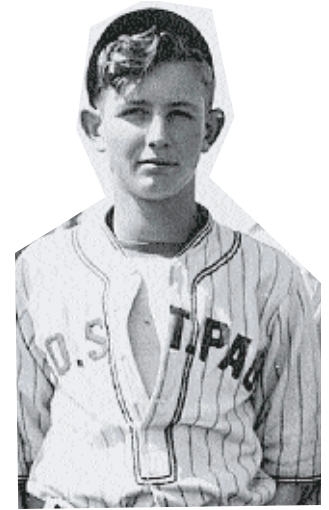




American Legion Minnesota Division I Tournament

Gazette



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Terry Ryan highlights Legion banquet

The 2014 Minnesota American Legion Baseball Tournament kicked off with the annual banquet Thursday night at the Eagan Community Center.

Terry Ryan, general manager of the Minnesota Twins, was the featured speaker, and he told of his day running the Twins as the trading deadline expired.

He also had some advice for the 300 or so ballplayers from the 16 teams gathered for the Division I tourney.

“There are no shortcuts in life, and there are no shortcuts on the baseball field. Respect the game,” he said.

Ryan commended American Legion Baseball because it emphasizes actually playing the games and teamwork. Too often, especially in the Latin American system, top young players are “showcased” rather than competing on a team, he said.

He said it was a great opportunity to play in

a state tournament. “Play as hard as you can, but remember the game is supposed to be fun too.”

Ryan also talked about his battle with cancer. “I can’t travel, and that’s no way to be a general manager. You have to keep battling, because what’s the alternative? It really puts life in a true perspective.”

The evening featured comments by American Legion State Commander Mike Ash and Baseball Director Mike Perry.

Two awards were given out. Dennis Frey of Howard Lake was inducted into the American Legion Baseball Hall of Fame. He is a longtime baseball volunteer and is also active at his post.

Scott Hackett, Eden Prairie, was named Coach of the Year. He took his team to a national title three years ago.

Hackett told the players that they would remember this tournament the rest of their lives, and he said that Legion baseball in

Minnesota is as strong as anywhere in country, and that the final two teams that go onto regional play should expect to do well.

“It can be harder to win the Minnesota tournament than it is to win a regional.”

Play will begin on four fields today, with two games each at Eagan Varsity Field, Red Haddock Field in Bloomington and two fields at Alimagnet Park in Burnsville.

A complete bracket of the tournament is on the reverse of this page.

The tourney is a double-elimination format spread out over four days.

Play will conclude Monday at Eagan with the semi-final game at 10 a.m. and the final game at 1 p.m.

The Division II Tournament featuring the smaller schools in the state, will also begin today with single-elimination competition at Luverne. Eight teams will compete to advance to regional play.

Excelsior tops final baseball poll

Excelsior finished atop the final American Legion Division I poll, establishing itself as the team to beat in this year’s state tourney.

Tri-City Red of New Brighton finished second. Last year’s state champion, Eden Prairie, did not make the tournament this year.

The final poll results included:

- 1. Excelsior 140
- 2. Tri-City 125
- 3. Lakeville North 105
- 4. Burnsville 59
- 5. Hamline Purple 45
- 6. Chaska 39
- 7. Eden Prairie 38
- 8. New Ulm Gold 36
- 9. Alexandria 28
- 10. Rochester Redhawks 26
- 11. Nisswa 23

- 12. St. Cloud Chutes 22
- 13. Champlin 20
- 14. Edina 19
- 15. Wayzata 15
- 16. Eastview 13
- 17. Hopkins 5
- 18. Shakopee 4
- 19. Delano 3
- 20. Chanhassen 2
- 21. East Ridge 2
- 22. St. Francis 1

Several teams fell off the final poll after being rated highly in the previous poll including Bloomington Blue (10), Mahtomedi (6) and North St. Paul (9)

The poll is conducted with 14 baseball coaches and experts around the state.

Excelsior took all 14 first place votes.



TERRY RYAN