

The Gazette



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First baseman Mitch Klass digs one out of the dust for the Excelsior Fire Club en route to a 14-3 victory over Edina.

Excelsior in regional; Edina, Woodbury play in semi-final game

In the battle of unbeatens, Excelsior scored nine runs in the first inning and cruised to a 14-3 five-inning win over Edina in the final game Friday.

Excelsior now advances to the championship game and has earned an automatic trip to Sioux Falls for the national regional beginning this week.

Winner of the regional will play in the Legion World Series.

Edina will play Woodbury, who fought its way back through the losers' bracket, in the 10 a.m. game today. The winner of that game will play Excelsior for the state title in the 12:30 p.m. game at Cold Spring Baseball Park. The winner of that game also advances to the national regional.

In the two losers' bracket games earlier in the day, Buffalo topped New Ulm 5-1 and Woodbury edged past Tri-City 4-2. Woodbury then beat Buffalo 5-4 to earn the right to play on Sunday.

In the Division II tourney in Ely, Plato beat Wadena 4-0 in a semi-final game. The other semi-final was still in progress when this Gazette went to press.

Excelsior reaches final with another big inning

By John Sherman

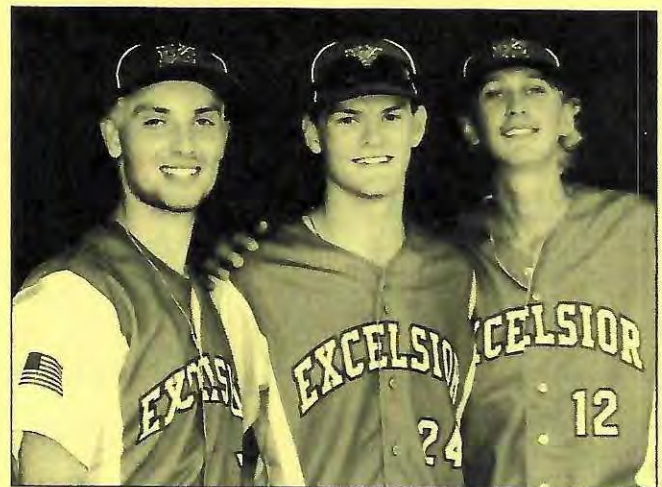
Excelsior (51-2) has had many big innings this season, but none was more important than the nine-run first in a 14-3 win over Edina Saturday night at Cold Spring Baseball Park. With the victory, the Fire Club has clinched a berth in the Central Plains Regional in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Five walks and six hits in the first inning staked the Fire Club to its big lead, and pitcher Will LaLonde did the rest, scattering eight hits in five innings.

"After our hard-fought game against Tri-City Red last night, the bats kept going today," said Excelsior shortstop Jarod Wandersee, who led the way with two singles, a double and three RBIs. Will Sturek and Nick Thimsen each had three RBIs, as well.

"Every time someone hits a ball against me, I know our fielder has a chance," said LaLonde, who had three strikeouts in Saturday's contest. The key for the righthander was hit-

Continued on Page 4



The boys of summer: Will LaLonde, Nick Thimsen, and Jarod Wandersee led the Fire Club in the win over Edina.

Lastest scores, stats, updates: Go to legionbaseballhub.com

Hosts help make a memorable state tourney

By John Sherman

Twenty years from now, thirty years from now, players and fans who attended the 2019 State American Legion Baseball Tournament in Central Minnesota will still be talking about the pristine ballparks, not to mention the numerous games that went right down to the wire.

Cold Spring is the host of the tournament, however, the event was greatly enhanced by the synergy between Cold Spring and the other three game sites – Paynesville, St. Martin and Watkins.

Tournament Co-Chair Bill Thelen said, “We want to give kids from around the state an opportunity to see what baseball is like in Central Minnesota. It takes an army of people to run a tournament like this, and our goal is to put out a good product.”

Thelen mentioned the many hours Jamie Klehr and Randy Gill have contributed to the host committee’s three – year effort in preparing for the 2019 State Tournament.

While the ballparks hosting the tournament are wonderful attractions, the main attraction is the opportunity to watch some of the best Legion players in the state.

“At the end of the day, it’s just 30 games of baseball,” Thelen said.

Tournament Co-Chair Mike Bell headed coordination with the other three sites. St. Martin and Watkins hosted games on Thursday, while Paynesville was used as a site Thursday and Friday.

“We couldn’t have done this without those communities,” Bell said. “Most of our meetings were a lot of fun, but didn’t last very long because they all know what they’re doing. We coordinated with Bruce and Darla Geislinger in Watkins, Chris Stanley and Brad Skogland in Paynesville and Carl and Ruth Leiser in St. Martin.”

Bell’s roots in Cold Spring baseball run deep. “I was a bat-boy for the Springers [amateur team] when Cold Spring hosted the 1982 and 1986 State Amateur Tournaments, and I also played for the Springers,” he said.

Rich Haselhorst, the town banker at the State Bank of Cold Spring, coordinates the host committee’s finances for the State Legion Tournament.

“The Legion Tournament is less hectic than a State Amateur because Legion is only five days, compared to three weekends [for State Amateur]. It’s nice to have the city teams here to see our facilities. Fans are watching a lot of good baseball this week.”

“We know how to run a



Host committee members Bill Thelen, Rich Haselhorst and Mike Bell are ready to close up shop at the State Tournament Sunday.

good tournament,” Thelen said. “The biggest challenge is financial. We hope we can make a few bucks. We have a lot of great volunteers working at the tournament, and it has been good working with Mike Perry [State Baseball Director] and Mike Gort [District 7 Baseball Director]. I was on the phone with Mike Perry three times a day – either I called him or he called me. He has been nothing but outstanding to work with.”

Gort has spent the entire tournament supervising at Cold

Spring Baseball Park.

He complimented the four host sites on their preparation for the tournament.

“It is very obvious how much these communities care about baseball,” he said. “They are raising money every year to make improvements on their ballparks. For baseball fans visiting any one of these parks, they are things of beauty.”

When the State Tournament wraps up today, the members of the host committee will have earned a rest.

Stars of the Day

Brett Bateman, Tri-City Red’s University of Minnesota-bound pitcher and center fielder, hit a double and scored a run in his team’s 4-2 loss to Woodbury Blue Saturday morning at Cold Spring Baseball Park.

Rodney Erickson of Woodbury Blue pitched four-hit ball over six innings as his team eliminated Tri-City Red 4-2.

Quinn Krueger of Woodbury Blue had a good offensive showing in a 4-2 win over Tri-City Red. He went two-for-four with a run scored and an RBI.

Kai Brisk pitched a complete game in Buffalo’s 5-1 win over New Ulm Gold Saturday afternoon in Cold Spring. Brisk also had an impact on offense with two RBIs.

Jaden Domeier of New Ulm Gold had a pair of hits during his team’s 5-1 season-ending loss to Buffalo Saturday.

Ethan Hansen of Buffalo came through with two hits and

scored a run in a 5-1 win over New Ulm Gold.

Brock Rinehart of Woodbury Blue had a big day on the mound, saving a 4-2 win over Tri-City Red and then hurling a complete game to eliminate Buffalo 5-4.

Buffalo pitchers **Micah Rasat** and **Joshua Gavin** combined on a two-hitter in the Bisons’ 5-4 loss to Woodbury Blue on Saturday.

Jarod Wandersee of Excelsior had three hits and drove in three runs in a 14-3 victory over Edina at Cold Spring Baseball Park.

Will Sturek’s three RBIs helped boost Excelsior to a 14-3, five-inning victory over Edna.

Will LaLonde of Excelsior pitched a complete game in the winners’ bracket final to beat Edina 14-3 in five innings. He allowed eight hits and fanned three.

Stats for the first three days

Average

Hunter Wehling	Excelsior	.625
Johnathan Bunce	Edina	.556
William Sturek	Excelsior	.545
Hunter Ranweiler	New Ulm Gold	.500
Nicholas Thimsen	Excelsior	.500
Jarod Wandersee	Excelsior	.500
Caden Esinda-Banik	Eastview Thun-	.500
Joseph Vos	Lakeview	.500
Sam Malec	Woodbury Blue	.471
John Hanson	Excelsior	.455

OPS

Hunter Wehling	Excelsior	1.700
Johnathan Bunce	Edina	1.667
Joseph Vos	Lakeview	1.645
Nicholas Thimsen	Excelsior	1.617
William Sturek	Excelsior	1.576
John Hanson	Excelsior	1.418
Jackson Hauge	Anoka	1.371
Hunter Ranweiler	New Ulm Gold	1.292
Damien Biegert	Buffalo	1.229
Calvin James	Buffalo	1.229

Hits

Sam Malec	Woodbury Blue	8
Jarod Wandersee	Excelsior	7
Chrisopher Knowles	New Ulm Gold	6
Hunter Ranweiler	New Ulm Gold	6
William Sturek	Excelsior	6
Nicholas Thimsen	Excelsior	6
Adam Mazur	Woodbury Blue	6

RBI

Nicholas Thimsen	Excelsior	8
Christopher Knowles	New Ulm Gold	5
Hunter Wehling	Excelsior	5
Lucas Fleming	Edina	5
Isaac Mezzenga	Tri-City Red	4

Home runs

Nicholas Thimsen	Excelsior	2
Johnathan Bunce	Edina	1
John Hanson	Excelsior	1
Hunter Wehling	Excelsior	1
Evan Glunz	Woodbury Blue	1
Adam Mazur	Woodbury Blue	1
Kyle Nelson	Eastview Thunder	1
Joseph Vos	Lakeview	1
Christopher Sampson	Lakeview	1
Jackson Hauge	Anoka	1
Earl Michael	Mpls SW Lakers	1
Jackson Trousil	East Grand Forks	1
Calvin James	Buffalo	1
Kai Brisk	Buffalo	1

Strikeouts

John Solfest	Tri-City Red	12
Adam Mazur	Woodbury Blue	10
Jaxon Edwards	Lakeview	10
Lucas Fleming	Edina	8
Michael Sturek	Excelsior	8
Michael O'Connor	Austin	7
Isaac Mezzenga	Tri-City Red	7
Dallas Carey	Ham Lake	7
Cam Kramer	Anoka	7

Innings pitched

Quinn Kruger	Woodbury Blue	8
Brock Rinehart	Woodbury Blue	8
Aaron Portner	New Ulm Gold	7
Tanner Hopkins	Edina	7
Drew Bishop	Edina	7
John Solfest	Tri-City Red	7
Dallas Carey	Ham Lake	7
Evan Soeffker	Buffalo	7
Kai Brisk	Buffalo	7
Noah Christenson	Buffalo	7
Rudy Notch	Cold Spring	7

WHIP

John Solfest	Tri-City Red	0.286
Mark Schommer	New Ulm Gold	0.529
Aaron Portner	New Ulm Gold	0.571
Evan Soeffker	Buffalo	0.714
Matthew Richmond	Ham Lake	0.750
Michael O'Connor	Austin	0.833

Complete summaries for Saturday

GAME 25

WOODBURY BLUE 000 040 0 4 5 1
TRI-CITY RED 100 010 0 2 4 3

WP Erickson, LP Rankin, 2B Bateman, Tri-City Red.

Defending Division I Legion Tournament state champion Tri-City Red was eliminated by Woodbury Blue 4-2 on Saturday morning at Cold Spring Baseball Park. Rodney Erickson pitched six innings for Woodbury Blue before handing the ball to Brock Rinehart, who immediately threw a double play ball upon entering the game. That play went from second baseman Sam Malec to shortstop Adam Mazur to first baseman Trent Glaeser. Malec and Quinn Krueger led Woodbury Blue's offense with two hits each. Brett Bateman, Channing Cole, Robert Hogan and Carter Traczyk had Tri-City Red's four hits. Tri-City Red's final record was 24-5.

GAME 26

BUFFALO 030 020 0 5 6 1
NEW ULM GOLD 000 010 1 1 8 4

WP Brisk, LP Zimmerman, 3B Biegert, Buffalo, 2B H. Ranweiler, New Ulm Gold.

Buffalo stayed alive in the State Tournament, clinching at least fourth place with a 5-1 win over New Ulm Gold at Cold Spring Baseball Park Saturday afternoon. Winning pitcher Kai Brisk made good use of his defense, striking out three in going the distance. Ethan Hansen led Buffalo with two hits. Jaden Domeier had two hits for New Ulm Gold.

GAME 27

BUFFALO 040 000 0 4 6 0
WOODBURY BLUE 104 000 X 5 2 3

WP B. Rinehart, LP Rasaf, 2B Mazur, Woodbury Blue.

Woodbury Blue had only two hits against Buffalo Saturday afternoon, but that ultimately didn't matter in a 5-4 win. Adam Mazur and Evan Glunz had the hits for Woodbury Blue, which had a complete game from Brock Rinehart. Earlier in the day, Rinehart had the save in a win over Tri-City Red.

GAME 28

EXCELSIOR 904 10 14 11 1
EDINA 002 01 3 8 2

WP LaLonde, LP Quello, 2B Will Sturek, Wandersee.

Excelsior exploded for nine runs in the top of the first on the way to a 14-3, five-inning win over South Hennepin League rival Edina.

Lead-off batter Jarod Wandersee led Excelsior, going three-for-four, while teammates Will Sturek and Nick Thimsen each contributed three RBIs. Mathew Enck, Cam Schmidt and Jack Murphy had RBIs for Edina. Excelsior is 51-2 going into the championship game at 12:30 p.m. Sunday at Cold Spring Baseball Park.

Note from the Editor:

For the last 23 years, this newspaper, *the Gazette*, has been distributed at every game, a total of 92 issues.

I don't know if this will be the last *Gazette*, but it will be the last one where I am the editor as I sail off into the sunset.

I need to acknowledge the crack media staff I've worked with all these years. John Sherman, the Grantland Rice of the western suburbs, has written about 90 percent of the stories. Gail Kalata, the Tri-City godmother and glue that holds the Fourth District and Legion Baseball together, has also held our office together. And lately, Matt Baker, the grandson of the legendary Joe Baker of Moorhead, has been the ace statistician and electronics wizard.

We were often still at the ballpark till well past midnight, but the camaraderie and amazing stuff that happened made it all worthwhile.

My thanks to those three, and all the other Legion baseball people it has been my honor to work with through the years.

— Al Zdon, Editor



Director Mike Perry presented a plaque to Baseball Secretary Al Zdon marking his retirement after 23 years.

Excelsior scores big early in 14-3 victory over Edina

Continued from Page 1
ting his spots.

"I trust everyone on the team," LaLonde said.

Th 9-0 lead was nice for LaLonde, but the Fire Club knew they had to keep plugging

away.

"We always say, 'Keep your foot on the gas,'" said Thimsen, one of the leading hitters in the tournament thus far. "At the end of the day, you still have to finish the game."

Going into the state-championship game at 12:30 p.m. at Cold Spring Baseball Park, Excelsior still has pitching in place.

"We have Ethan Rommes to start," LaLonde said. "And Will

Sturek will be ready in relief."

Rommes, who has not pitched yet in the State Tournament, is an ace. The proof is he has thrown two no-hitters this season.