

Chase Ends Race for NSP

By Greg Schmidt

July 21, 2005

For five innings July 21 at North St. Paul (15-19, 7-8) the Red swung away at a variety of junk pitches and was stuck in a 2-2 quagmire. Said Red manager Jeff Larsen: "After awhile of 15, 16 fly balls — I'd seen enough of those things."

So did his players — notably Chase Traeger (2 for 4, 2B, 2-RBI, SB), who laced a 1-2 pitch to left centerfield for a two-run double in the sixth that broke the tie and gave the Red their first advantage and eventually a 4-2 victory.

"It was frustrating [until then]," said Traeger. "Coach told us to forget about what we've done in the past against [Cole Hutchens] . . . it didn't work until the last at bat for me unfortunately, but we got the win."

It was a win that was looking difficult to get in the early going. The Red did, however, manage to keep things even on a sacrifice fly to left from Bjorn Anderson in the second that scored Evan Eid (1 for 1, 2-HBP, SB). Trailing again by a run in the fourth, Derek Moen (2 for 3, 2B, RBI) doubled down the left field line for the equalizer.

On the mound Blake Searles (4-SO) stood strong with a major gut-check in the third after an error on a potential double play led to a one-out bases loaded jam. He struck out the next two to end the threat and that effort was rewarded with double plays in the fourth and fifth. But the defense wasn't done yet. Another double whammy erased a leadoff single in the seventh as reliever Brandon Porten, who entered with a runner at first and nobody out in the sixth, picked up his first win in a Red uniform to go with his three saves. The game, originally slated for July 11 at Irondale, was rescheduled because of a tourney conflict for the Red.

The victory is the Red's fourth in as many days. The latest win, coupled with a sweep by Hamline over North End, has reduced the Red's magic number to one for the Fourth District regular season title. "We just want to keep winning, but obviously the top seed is important," Traeger said.

Tri-City (32-8, 12-3) will get a chance to do both when they meet second place Hamline (22-8, 12-5) at 6 p.m. Sunday at Irondale. The following day the Red hosts a double header against last-place Arcade-Phalen (4-10) and North End, currently in third at 10-6.

Tri-City holds the tiebreaker over both Hamline and North End. The regular season champ earns a bye while the remaining six teams battle in first round single elimination games Tuesday, July 26.

Fourth District July 21 (Game 40)

Tri-City Red 4, North St. Paul 2

NSP 0 1 1 0 0 0 0 — 2 8 0

TCR 0 1 0 1 0 2 x — 4 9 1

Hutchens and Adams; Searles, Porten (6) and Moen. W-Porten (1-0). L-Hutchens (1-5). HR-NSP, Adams (3).