

Red matches '99 district record Sweep of White Bear makes it official

By Greg Schmidt

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For only the second time in team history, Tri-City Red has finished the Fourth District regular season schedule with 17 victories.

And they did it in style with a pair of five-inning blowouts July 23 over White Bear Lake (15-21, 6-12) at Irondale.

In the final tilt, a 15-5 triumph, the Red scored a season-high 10 in the third inning powered by two, three-run round-trippers. But they were far from similar. The first was a cloud-jumping slow trot over the left field wall by Brady Field (3 for 4, 2B, HR, 5-RBI) for the Red's initial 3-0 lead. The second arrived with an all-out sprint as Derek McCallum (1 for 1, 2-BB, SF, HR, 4-RBI), with two runners on, blasted a mega-gapper to right-center for his second inside-the-park homer of the summer.

"The ball kept rolling and I kept running," McCallum said. Manager and third base coach went into windmill overload: "I just thought we're going for it, but I thought it'd be a little closer at the plate," he said.

It wasn't thanks to McCallum's typical extreme base-running precision.

It was the third homer of that type in his three-year Red career.

The last to do it was Billy Schneider ('97-'99), who is considered the greatest leadoff hitter in Red history.

McCallum's launch was the seventh hit of the inning. The Red finished with 12. Joe Colwell (3B, SB, 2-RBI), Bjorn Anderson (RBI, SB) and Brian Marshik (BB, RBI) each went 2 for 3.

The 17-1 record matches the 1999 team that went on to win the state, regional and World Series.

"I don't know if we were thinking about [matching 17-1] during the game, but it was definitely in the back of our minds," McCallum said.

Added Field: "It's really impressive when you think about it. It's a great way to finish — I mean the '99 team was incredible, just unbelievable — setting the home run record (126) for the nation and everything . . . just to be compared to them in some ways, it's a confidence booster."

The only district loss for the Red was 2-1 in extra innings to Hamline June 20. In 1999, the Red dropped their district opener 10-8 to the now defunct Korean Vets sponsored team.

In order to match the record, the Red needed to grab the first go-round and they didn't waste any time scoring five times in their first at bat on their way to a 12-2 victory. Jake Lechner (3 for 3, 2-RBI) capped the first inning scoring spree with an RBI single on the first of his three hits. He added a two-run single in a three-run third for an 8-1 advantage before the Red moved ahead by double digits in the fourth starting with an RBI double by Erik Anderson (1 for 2, 2B, SF, 2-RBI) along with back-to-back sacrifice flies by Brett Cleveringa (2 for 2, SF, RBI) and Brandon Porten (1 for 2, SF, RBI).

Tri-City (28-8) opens the postseason July 26 at Midway with first pitch at 8 p.m. All postseason games are nine innings. The Red enters the show with less pitching than in the past, but is expecting a great run behind their timely hitting and stellar defense. The team has won 14 straight games after losing 11-1 to Chaska-Chanhassen I in the Gopher Classic.

"You want momentum going into the playoffs and I think we're peaking right where we need to," McCallum said. "We're playing our best ball right now."

Larsen said the current roster reminds him of the '97 squad. "Yeah, with the defense we have and [style] of play," he said.

The '97 version also had consistent hitting throughout the lineup, but like the current team wasn't blessed with an extremely deep pitching staff. The '06 squad entered the season loaded, but lost Adam Weber (1-0) because of his extensive football commitment as an incoming freshman quarterback at the U of M. Sam Weber (3-0) suffered a broken thumb to his pitching hand and will be out the remainder of the season.

"But they've won a lot of games [in the regular season] without Sam and Adam," Larsen said. "Now we'll go and see what we can do in the [postseason]."

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Tri-City Red 15, White Bear Lake 5, 5 inn. (Game 36)

WB	0	0	0	4	0	—	5	5	2
TC	0	0	(10)	5	x	—	15	12	1

Stone, Lassche (3), Urban (4) and Bircher; Rosin, Porten (4) and Field.
W-Rosin (5-1). L-Lassche. HR-TCR, Field (4), McCallum (4).

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Tri-City Red 12, White Bear Lake 2, 5 inn. (Game 35)

WB	0	0	1	0	1	—	2	5	1
TC	5	0	3	4	x	—	12	10	1

Johnson, Manos (2), Bircher (4) and Bircher, Manos (4); Colwell, Searles (5) and E. Anderson. W-Colwell (4-1). L-Johnson.