Gopher Classic:
Red doesn't advance, but downs champ
By Greg Schmidt
July 16, 2006

Although Tri-City Red (16-8) narrowly missed out on a berth into the elite eight at the Gopher Classic, they did accomplish one feat that nobody else could match in the 48-team tourney July 7-11: They beat Napoleon (OH) 12-7 in a combined 30-hit shootout July 9 in the fifth and final game of pool play at Braemer Park in Edina.

Neither team wasted any time pushing runs across with the Red going up 3-0 in the top of the first and Napoleon answering with four of their own in the bottom of the frame.

A two-out, three-run double from Brian Marshik (3 for 5, 2B, 5-RBI) put the Red in front again 6-5 in the third, but once again Napoleon returned the favor by tying it in their next at bat.

Finally in the fifth the Red took the lead for good on another timely hit by Marshik — a two-run single.

The Red extended the lead 11-6 with three runs in the sixth to put it out of reach. Also with multiple hits: Derek McCallum (3 for 4, BB, RBI), Bjorn Anderson (3 for 3, BB, SAC), Joe Colwell (2 for 5, 2B) and Billy Gazich (2 for 5). Erik Anderson finished 1 for 4 with two RBI.

Red newbie Erik Fiegel (5.2-IP, 12-H, 0-BB, 3-SO), weathered the Napoleon hit barrage long enough to gain his third victory.

Despite the loss, Napoleon still won the pool with a 4-1 mark followed by the Red at 3-2. Napoleon then defeated Fargo 8-0 in the quarterfinals and Billings (MT) 5-2 in the semifinals before edging the Red's South Dakota rival Rapid City Post #22 with a 7-5 score in the championship.

Along with being the only team to defeat Napoleon, the Red may have also been the only team that allowed the captains to each have a crack at choosing the batting order. Coincidentally, all three games where captains Billy Gazich, Derek McCallum and Chase Traeger were involved, the Red proved victorious. "It was fun for them," manager Jeff Larsen said. "It's the first time we've ever done it."

July 9, 2006, Game 24
Tri-City Red 12, Napoleon OH 7 (Game 24)
TCR 303 023 1 — 12 15 1
Nap 411 001 0 — 7 15 1

Fiegel, Cleveringa (6), Colwell (7) and Field; Anderson, Johnson (4) and Olson. W-Fiegel (3-1). L-Johnson.

The first four games had ups and downs — and zaniness
Tri-City Red 6, Cranston, Rhode Island 5, 9 inn.

Despite some obnoxious moments by the Rhode Island coach and players in the overtime, it was an exciting game as the Red dumped the East-coasters 6-5 in nine innings in the July 9 pool play meeting.

Brandon Porten sparked the win with the longest stint of his Legion career. He entered in the second with one out and surrendered only one earned run the rest of the way. "That was a stretch for him and actually he got better as he went along," Larsen said on Porten's near 90-pitch performance. "That's the most he's ever thrown. It was a gutsy performance. He just did a really good job, a really good performance."

The Red fell behind 5-2, but tied it with a three-run fourth inning. The teams traded eggs on the scoreboard until the bottom of the ninth when McCallum (2 for 5, 2B, RBI) ripped a one-out double and later scored on a gapper from Billy Gazich.

"Beating Napoleon was a great game, but really a game I'll go back to is Rhode Island — going nine innings and coming out with a win. It was a real blue-collar game that set the stage for Napoleon," Larsen said.Chase Traeger led all hitters going 3 for 4. Brady Field (BB, 2-RBI) and Erik Anderson (RBI) each went 2 for 4.

The overtime heroics overshadowed the ridiculous antics of the Rhode Island's coaching staff and players — which resulted in an ejection of the head coach.

Said Larsen on the incident: "[Their coach] was trying to rally his troops — argued every call and pretty soon the [Rhode Island] kids are thinking and acting that way. Those kinds of distractions don't make a lot of sense to me."

Chaska/Chanhassen (I) 11, Tri-City Red 1, 6 inn.
A sweep on the final day was more than welcome for Red fans especially after the clunker the team offered up the day before. Chaska/Chanhassen I (10-10) punished the Red 11-1 in six innings. It was their worst loss of the season and was the second straight defeat in the tourney, which all but guaranteed they wouldn't win the pool.

Bemdji 9, Tri-City Red 6
The Chaska loss followed a demoralizing late inning collapse in the second round of pool play against Bemidji July 7 as the Red uncharacteristically fell apart on the mound and was dealt a 9-6 defeat. Bemidji (12-7) racked up 13 hits and three of those cleared the fence — the highest amount of moon shots allowed in a game by the Red this summer. The first arrived in the top of the fourth. The Red showed their own power in the bottom of the inning with a two-run shot by Brady Field (1 for 2, 2-SAC, HR, 2-RBI) that followed an RBI double by Derek McCallum (1 for 3, 2B, BB, SB, RBI) to cap a three-run inning and a 6-2 advantage. Bemidji immediately drew even in their next chance at the plate with four hits in the fifth including their second two-run homer. The Red managed only two hits the rest of the way and was left with a first-day split.

Tri-City Red 9, Edina 1, 6 inn.
The Red opened the tourney July 7 with a 9-1, six-inning demolition of site host Edina behind a strong plate showing highlighted by a grand slam from Derek McCallum (2 for 4, HR, 4-RBI) to right-center in the third inning. Seconds later Brady Field (2 for 3, HR, BB, RBI) followed that up by crushing the first pitch over left-center to make it 6-0. An error in the fifth made it 7-1 and the Red put it away in the sixth by capitalizing on a trio of two-out free passes, the last of which was issued to Erik Anderson (0 for 3, BB, RBI) with the bases full. Moments later the tourney's eight-run rule came to fruition on a wild pitch that scored McCallum. Also on the scorecard: Chase Traeger (2 for 3), Blake Searles (1 for 3, 2B, RBI), Billy Gazich (1 for 3, BB), Joe Colwell (1 for 2, 2-BB), Brett Cleveringa (1 for 2, 2B) and Brian Marshik (1 for 1). Sam Weber picked up his second victory scattering five hits with three strikeouts.