

Princeton Invitational

By Greg Schmidt

July 19, 2006

Tri-City edges Fridley “Eagles” in quarterfinals

A single by Blake Searles not only was timely, but also the game winner in the Red’s 3-1 triumph over Fridley (19-10) in the quarterfinals of the Princeton tourney July 13 at Solheim Field.

Although the teams hadn’t met in years, the Red, at least some of their players, were familiar with the Fridley cast.

“I think we all knew [the guys from Mounds View] — we knew they had some [Totino-Grace] guys, so there was a little extra motivation to go out and win,” Searles said. “We just played our game and things came our way.”

Tri-City (20-8) collected only two hits off Fridley starter Mike Bower through the first five innings. But in the sixth with the score even at 1-1, they quickly doubled that total on a leadoff bunt single by Brian Marshik (1 for 2, BB) and sharp liner to left from Derek McCallum (1 for 3). Brady Field’s flyout to deep right allowed Marshik to tag up and move to third. Seconds later a double steal attempt failed yet succeeded at the same time. Although Marshik was unable to score, McCallum escaped a hot box and ended up on second to put a pair in scoring position. Next up was Searles.

“I was just trying to get a ball in the air and try and get a [sacrifice fly] in there and get one run in,” Searles said.

Even better: Searles (1 for 3, 2-RBI) ripped the first pitch for a single up the middle to make it 3-1. Starter Seth Rosin followed that up by facing four batters in the seventh — striking out three to lift the Red into the semifinals against Minneapolis Post Office.

July 13, 2006, Quarterfinal

Tri-City Red 3, Fridley 1 (Game 28)

Fridley	0	0	0	0	1	0	—	1	7	1	
Tri-City Red	0	0	0	1	0	2	x	—	3	5	0

Bower and Johnson; Rosin and Field. W-Rosin (3-1). L-Bower (4-2).

Porten’s team-leading fourth win lifts Red into title game

Like the first round, timely hitting was the name of the game, but even better in the Red’s 5-1 semifinal victory against Minneapolis Post Office (13-9) July 15. Both were two-run singles and each carried it’s own significance. The first — from Erik Anderson (1 for 3,

2-RBI) in the second inning — gave the Red (21-8) their first lead 2-1. In the sixth with the Red clinging to a 3-1 score, Billy Gazich (2 for 3, 2-RBI) knocked in Derek McCallum (1 for 3) and Brady Field (1 for 3) with the third hit of the inning to absorb any momentum left on the gusty, but brutally hot day at Solheim Field. Not lost in the festival of key hits was another great start by Red pitching. The complete game gem by Brandon Porten (7-H, 0-ER, 0-BB, 1-SO) made him the first to four victories and extended the Red's win streak to seven.

“He threw strikes and had no walks and that's good baseball. He did a great job,” said Larsen. “They know how it feels now to play in a semi and not a toilet bowl semi.”

**July 15, 2006, Semifinal
Tri-City Red 5, Mpls. Post Office 1 (Game 29)**

Mpls PO	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	—	1	7	1
Tri-City Red	0	2	0	0	1	2	x	—	5	6	1

Maloney, Ransom (6), Baglien (6) and Miller; Porten and Field. W-Porten (4-1). L-Maloney (3-2).

Red gets seven year itch, wins one for the thumb

For the first time since 2003, the Red (22-8) reached the championship game of the Princeton Invitational.

Let's go back some more.

For the first time since 1999, the Red won the Princeton Invitational.

It was a seven-year drought put to rest with a 9-4 final over Grand Rapids (17-9) July 16 at Solheim Field. In a survival of the fittest, the Red's pitching depth outperformed Grand Rapids with Joe Colwell getting his third consecutive win. He pitched into the sixth with one out before giving way to Seth Rosin, who closed out the Red's fifth overall Princeton title and first tourney championship this summer.

Trailing 3-2 after four innings, the Red regained the lead in the fifth with a five-run burst.

With one out and two runners in scoring position, Derek McCallum (2 for 3, BB, 2-2B, 3-RBI) stepped to the plate prompting a timeout by the Grand Rapids coaching staff.

“I figured the meeting at the mound was going to be to kind of pitch around the corners and see if I'll chase something so I kind of let him throw a few and the ump was giving it to him,” McCallum said. “I didn't think they were very close.”

With two questionable strike calls, McCallum had seen enough. He crushed the next offering off the right field wall, narrowly missing a three-run homer. Instead, it was a two-run double that put the Red back in front 4-3 after blowing a 2-0 advantage in the previous inning.

“That’s why he’s in the third hole,” manager Jeff Larsen said. “It’s been a little frustrating for him not having guys in front of him on base. And he slammed that one. That was huge.”

With two out, Blake Searles (1 for 3, BB, 2-RBI) singled McCallum home to make it 5-3. Searles eventually made it to third on a base hit by Colwell (2 for 4). A walk to Chase Traeger (1 for 3, BB) left the bases full for Erik Anderson (0 for 2, BB, RBI), who also earned a free pass to push home the Red’s sixth run. That prompted a change, but it didn’t make a difference as Bjorn Anderson (1 for 3, BB, RBI) followed his brother’s lead by also drawing a bases-loaded freebie.

Billy Gazich led both sides going 3 for 5 (RBI) including a home run to lead off the game.

Officials had the trophy at the ready and two innings later the Red happily accepted. It was a controlled enthusiasm — possibly because the current players were enlightened about the history behind taking this tourney. Following the Red’s four previous tourney titles, they’ve gone on to claim the state championship.

Said McCallum: “Coach Larsen brought that up before the tournament — so that’s kind of exciting . . . we had a little something extra to play for here. Maybe it’s just a coincidence — maybe it’ll happen. Hopefully it happens.”

Larsen acknowledged the coincidence, but did say that victories in Princeton are also simply a result of “playing good ball all the way around towards the end of the season.” He also added, “What you’re really looking for is the character in the team this time of year. They’re hustling, they’re playing hard-nosed ball and that’s really what you want. That’s what champions are made of.”

**July 16, 2006 Championship
Tri-City Red 9, Grand Rapids 4 (Game 30)**

Tri-City Red	2	0	0	0	5	1	1	—	9	10	1
Grand Rapids	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	—	4	11	1

Colwell, Rosin (6) and Field; Hovet, St. Germain (5), Graupmann (6),
Magner (6) and Shaw. W-Colwell (3-1). L-Hovet (3-2). HR-TCR, Gazich
(2).