

## **Red finally returns home Clinches Fourth District regular season title**

By Greg Schmidt

July 25, 2007

Tri-City Red (26-8) knew the stakes before hitting the field July 23 at Irondale. A victory would clinch the Fourth District championship. A loss would give the 'chasers' hope.

But there would be no hint of collapse or prolonging the inevitable as the Red scored three times in their first at bat on their way to a 5-1 win over White Bear Lake (11-15, 4-12). "That was a 'wanna win'" said manager Jeff Larsen. "They went out and responded."

Walks to Brian Marshik (1 for 2, SAC, BB) and Tommy Thompson (1 for 1, 2-BB) led to a two-out, two-run single to centerfield by Blake Searles (1 for 3, 2-RBI). Capping the first inning rush was an RBI double by Brett Cleveringa — also known as 'Cluberinga' by the Red faithful. "He's had some really big hits including up in Princeton.

He's really hitting the ball hard," said manager Jeff Larsen.

It was the first of three doubles for Cleveringa (3 for 3, 3-2B, 3-RBI). His second boomer reached the left-centerfield fence and knocked in two additional runs to give the Red a comfortable 5-1 advantage in the third inning. That was more than enough for starter Erik Fiegel (5-IP, 1-R, 0-BB, 2-SO) and relievers Paul Myers (sixth inning) and David 'Nyshek' Norgard (seventh). "Fiegel did a really nice job tonight as did Myers. And Norgard — he's a fan favorite and a team favorite and did well again," Larsen said.

The victory clinched at least a tie for best record (13-1) with second place North St. Paul (9-5), but the three-game season sweep secures the head-to-head tiebreaker for the Red.

"It's a great accomplishment for these young men and my coaching staff and all the fans and sponsors. It's pretty thrilling," Larsen said.

With four games left in the regular season, Larsen appreciates the early clinching. "It gives us a chance to keep everybody fresh for next week." Locking up the title also gives the Red a bye in the dreaded first round of knockout games in the district playoffs, July 31-Aug. 4.

### **Tri-City Red 5, White Bear Lake 1 (Game 34, July 23, 2007)**

White Bear	0	1	0	0	0	0	—	1	7	0	
Tri-City Red	3	0	2	0	0	0	x	—	5	6	0

Oosterhuis, Letourneau (5) and Bates; Fiegel, Myers (6), Norgard (7) and Tetrick. W-Fiegel (4-1). L-Oosterhuis (2-2).

The White Bear tilt marked a homecoming of sorts for the Red. They hadn't touched their home field at Irondale in nearly a month (June 27). The previous week Tri-City had two district tilts, the second of which dealt the team their first district loss of the summer as Hamline slipped past the Red 4-2 July 17 at Midway Stadium. That prevented a season-sweep, but did little to affect the Red's run at the district title. That's because the night before, also at Midway, the Red did complete a three-game season sweep of North St. Paul in dramatic fashion with a 1-0 victory in nine innings. As the score indicates, there weren't many big hits and the outcome actually hinged on an outstanding defensive play.

With two out and the Red clinging to their one-run lasso in the bottom of the ninth, North St. Paul's Matt Borndale launched a deep fly ball to centerfield. A diving attempt fell short, but the throw and relay arrived just in time to catch Borndale at third base.

The Red finished with only two hits (Blake Searles and Dan Reichert), neither of which played a role in the winning run. Instead it was leadoff walk to Erik Fiegel followed by a pinch hit-sacrifice bunt by Jake Lechner. Additional free passes issued to Brian Marshik and Nick Colwell left the bases juiced for Tommy Thompson. Staying with the trend, Thompson drew a walk to push Fiegel home.

"It was one of those typical games with North St. Paul," Larsen said, referring to the rivals' tight-fisted battles over the years. However in more recent times, particularly the last two matchups, Red pitchers have stymied North St. Paul with two shutouts. Going back to the first meeting, North St. Paul has failed to plate a run in 17 consecutive innings.

**Hamline 4, Tri-City Red 2  
(Game 30, July 17, 2007)**

Tri-City Red	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	—	2	8	1
Hamline	0	0	1	2	1	0	x	—	4	10	0

Searles, Pedersen (5), Phillippi (6) and Anderson; Swanson, Cahalan (6) and Zwach. W-Swanson (2-3). L-Searles (2-1). S-Cahalan (1).

**Tri-City Red 1, North St. Paul 0, 9 inn.  
(Game 29, July 16, 2007)**

Tri-City Red	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	—	1	2	1
North St. Paul	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0	3	4

Porten, Rosin (8) and Anderson; Hubbard, Hannigan (9) and Adams. W-Rosin (4-0). L-Hannigan.