

Fargo-Moorhead Invitational Tournament Coverage

By Greg Schmidt, July 6, 2008

Hershey delivers again in the clutch

Brandon Hershey's single to left-center was the difference in the Red's 5-4, extra-inning win June 27 over Parkston (S.D.), in the first round of pool play of the Fargo-Moorhead tourney at Jack Williams Stadium. The two-out single was the second hit of the day for Hershey (2 for 4, 3B, 2-RBI), who pushed the second run for the Red (14-1) across with a triple to center in the first inning.



Parkston immediately grabbed the lead away with three runs in the top of the second and led 4-2 until the bottom of the fifth when Tommy Thompson (2 for 4, 2B, 3-RBI, R) smacked a two-run double to center scoring Luke Ross (1 for 2, BB, R) and David Freed (2 for 3, BB, 3-R).

After being tagged for some early runs, Red starter Aaron Page (pictured here) settled in and held Parkston without a hit from the fourth inning on, before giving way to reliever Phil Wessberg to start the seventh.

Wessberg allowed just one hit, while facing just one over the minimum, in his two innings of work to earn the victory. The win kept the Red unbeaten at 6-0 in one-run games this summer.

Tri-City Red 5, Parkston (SD) 4, 8 inn.

Game 15, June 27, 2008

Parkston SD	0	3	1	0	0	0	—	4	7	2		
Tri-City Red	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	—	5	7	3

Nolz, Murtha (8) and Sudbeck; Page, Wessberg (7) and Tetric. W - Wessberg (2-0). L-Murtha.

Reichert tosses no-hitter

Well, it was a game for an inning — one inning exactly — and then the Red stormed past host Fargo June 27 in grand fashion 15-2.

In their second at bat, the Red (15-1) pushed seven across the dish, while racking up just as many hits including two by Brandon Hershey, who led off with a double and later capped the inning with an RBI single to left. The hitting clinic went unmatched by Fargo — not even close actually. In fact, Red starter Dan Reichert didn't allow a hit. Fargo touched him up for a pair of meaningless runs in the fifth on a couple of bean balls and two errors, but still had no luck changing the zero in the hit column. Reichert fanned six and retired nine straight to end it and become the ninth pitcher to earn a victory this summer.

Back to Hershey (4 for 5, 2B, 3-RBI). He extended the Red's advantage to 9-0 with a two-run single in the fourth. About the only thing he didn't get was a walk. But plenty of other free passes (a dozen) were issued to his teammates, led by Jesse Nickols (1 for 2, 3-BB, 3-R, RBI).

The squad also capitalized on shoddy Fargo defense. In the seventh, the Red added four runs fueled by four Fargo miscues. Along with Hershey and Nickols, five others recorded one hit each: David Freed (RBI, 2-BB, SB, R), Tommy Thompson (RBI, BB, 3-R), Ian Goldsmith (2B, RBI, BB, 3-R), Jack Ries (R) and Matt Tetrick (2-RBI, BB, 2-R).

Tri-City Red 15, Fargo 2

Game 16, June 27, 2008

TC Red	0	7	0	2	0	2	4	—	15	10	2
Fargo	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	—	2	0	7

Reichert and Tetrick; Braaten, Sand (3), Myers (5) and Schwiegert. W- Reichert (1-0). L-Braaten.

The Red, the rain — and a shout out from above

Sometimes the rally caps aren't enough. Sometimes you need a boost from above — a higher power, an angel in your dugout. That's just what Tri-City Red (16-1) received June 28 at Jack Williams Stadium in an 11-6, four-inning victory over Eau Claire in the third round of pool play.

But it wasn't easy. Down 6-0 heading into the bottom of the third against Wisconsin's top-ranked team in their latest poll, the Red had a daunting task in front of them, and the outcome would likely mean the difference in advancing to the championship game (something the Red hadn't done since 1999) or simply playing out the string.

After Luke Ross (1 for 2, R, BB) led off with a single, and Matt Tetrick (0 for 2, BB, R) walked, the rally lost traction with two quick outs. But, as the Red has proven all summer, two outs are simply not enough. The Red ran off three RBI singles by Jesse Nickols (1 for 2, RBI, SB, BB, 2-R), Brandon Hershey (2 for 2, 2-RBI, BB, 2-R) and Brad Blumer (1 for 3, RBI, R). Then came the equalizer, as Jack Ries stepped to the plate with the bases loaded and promptly emptied them with a double to the centerfield fence. One pitching change later, Ross reached for the second time in the inning by drawing a walk and, just seconds after that, an overthrow on a pickoff attempt of Ross allowed Ries to race home with the eventual game-winner. Having Ries (2 for 2, 2B, BB, 4-RBI, R) be the catalyst for the incredible rally was poetic. He, after all, gave the team a momentous, yet light-hearted motivational speech prior to the first pitch.

“[Manager Jeff Larsen] told me to say a prayer before the game, and I just kind of inspired the guys a bit . . . using a preacher’s voice — kind of stirring them up a bit and kind of getting them going,” Ries said.

Granted it took a couple of innings for the full effect to be realized, but when it did, there was no stopping the Big Red Machine.

The Red extended its one-run advantage with four in the fourth – to take a seemingly insurmountable lead. But shockingly, the bit, the speech, the prayer, whatever the description, began to lose its grip as Eau Claire responded by plating six in the top of the fifth as the rain began to pick up from a nagging drizzle to steady rain. With two out and Eau Claire still rolling along, the rain increased further as if a higher power had seen enough. A higher power such as — just maybe — that of the late Elmer Buttweiler, the godfather of Tri-City baseball. With Eau Claire now in the lead 12-11, the rain began to intensify and – almost as if there was a spiritual nudge, maybe a ghostly tap on the shoulders of the umpires – play was suddenly suspended.

But would the game resume? It didn’t take long after the battered and soaked mound was covered in vain when the umps, stopped the game altogether.

Although the game hadn’t reached the required five complete innings, the umpires (maybe with another tap on the shoulder) chose to revert back to the score at the end of the fourth inning and call it an official game, making the Red the winner.

“I don’t know how much more damage [Eau Claire] would have done, but they have to factor in that we had scored 11 runs in the past two innings or something like that . . . We had built up quite a lead for ourselves and we still had to swing the bat [in the bottom of the inning],” Ries said. “Even if it was called after five I think we had a pretty good shot at taking the game.”

Some noted that the old adage ‘it never rains on Red’ really didn’t work out – to which Larsen replied, “Yeah it did because we got the right outcome.”

Added Ries: “Larsen always says it never rains on Red, but this was kind of an opportune time for it.”

Larsen also acknowledged that there might have been a higher power at work to keep the Red on the winning track. Ries agreed: “I wouldn’t bet against it,” he said. “This is a season dedicated to Elmer for how much he did for the Red program . . . Elmer’s spirit is always there with us.”

Tri-City Red 11, Eau Claire (Wis.) 6, 4 inn.

Game 17, June 28, 2008

Eau Claire	2	0	4	0	—	6	6	3
Tri-City Red	0	0	7	4	—	11	9	1

Holden, Clark (3) and Fadness; Thompson, Imdieke (3) and Tetrick. W- Imdieke (2-0). L-Holden.

Red leaves no doubt in reaching title game

After having tournament pool play at both the Fargo and Moorhead sites reshuffled and shortened by a game (due to the annoying and steady rain the day before), players and parents were gathered for an important meeting Sunday morning at “Red Central” (the traditional choice for Red’s Fargo lodging, the Holiday Inn Express). Due to field conditions, the entire schedule had been pushed back; thus, the championship game would not be played until 7 p.m. Sunday night, instead of 4 p.m. as originally planned. Concern for player safety prompted the meeting – considering the 3-4 hour drive home from Fargo, players and fans would not reach home until roughly 2 a.m. the next morning. The unanimous decision?... “PLAY ON AND WIN THIS THING!” After all, what would Elmer do?!

With that, the Red (17-1) was left with one simple task: win their final pool tilt and advance to the championship game – or lose, and possibly be left with a slim chance of not securing a yet-to-be-determined tiebreak scenario decided by tourney officials.

The Red chose the no-nonsense approach and crushed West Fargo 14-3 at Jack Williams Stadium.

And once again, it was another two-out strategy, as the Red methodically loaded the bases in the second inning with the help of three free passes. Then came the clutch hits: a two-run double by David Freed (2 for 4, 2B, 3-RBI, R, SB), two-run single from Dan Reichert (2 for 2, 4-RBI, 2-R, SB, 3-BB) and an RBI double by Nick Colwell (3 for 4, 2-2B, BB, RBI, 2-R).

The carnage continued with two in the fourth and two more in the fifth, with hits by Ian Goldsmith (1 for 4, R, 2-RBI), Brandon Hershey (2 for 5, RBI), Phil Wessberg (2 for 4, 3B, BB, RBI, 3-R) and Freed. Just for good measure, Tri-City added another quintuple in their final at bat, highlighted by Reichert's two-run line drive to left. On the mound Andy Gallagher (3-H, 3-SO) picked up his third win by blanking West Fargo for the first four innings.

Tri-City Red 14, West Fargo 3

Game 18, June 29, 2008

TC Red	0	5	0	2	2	0	5	—	14	12	2
West Fargo	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	—	3	4	2

Gallagher, Myers (5) and Wessberg; A. Sanderson, Benson (2), B. Sanderson (7) and Grombeck. W-Gallagher (3-1). L-Sanderson.

Red wins Fargo-Moorhead for first time since '99

For the first time in nearly a decade, Tri-City Red (18-1) claimed first place in the Fargo-Moorhead tourney. In the championship game June 29 at Jack Williams Stadium in Fargo (N.D.), the Red won comfortably 7-3 over long-time Wisconsin rival, DePere, ranked second in the latest Wisconsin poll.

“How about that . . . we’ve won Fargo in each century and [at least] once in each decade,” Red manager Jeff Larsen said.

And they wasted no time in seizing the moment by grabbing the early edge. Three base hits in the first inning by Nick Colwell (2 for 3, RBI, BB, 2-R), Jack Ries (1 for 3, BB, RBI) and Luke Ross (1 for 3, RBI) produced just as many runs. Colwell scored again in the third, this time on a wild pitch before the Red moved way out in front with another trifecta in the fourth. In that critical middle inning, Ethan Indieke (0 for 1, 2-BB, R) drew a leadoff walk while Matt Tetrick (1 for 3) and David Freed (2 for 4, 2-R) both bunted their way on to load it up for Dan Reichert (0 for 3, BB, RBI, R) who also registered a walk to put the Red in front 5-0. Two batters later, Freed came home on a single to right by Ian Goldsmith (1 for 2, BB, 2B, R, RBI).

A pitching change followed and it looked promising for DePere to escape without any further damage, but a dropped strike three to the next Red batter allowed Reichert to zip home for a momentum solidifying 7-0 advantage. The rest was up to Freed, who went the distance while fanning eight to become the first four-game winner this summer.

The Red finished fifth at last year’s tourney and ninth in 2006. Tri-City took first in 1997 and ’99, also the same two years they eventually advanced to the Legion World Series, winning it ’99.

Larsen was proud of the team effort. “Every player who made the trip to Fargo owns a piece of the trophy. I can’t think of anyone who didn’t contribute heavily to this championship at some point during the weekend.”

Fargo-Moorhead tourney director Jim Pettersen had this assessment: “I truly believe that the best team here won this tournament this year . . . Congratulations to Tri-City and good luck the rest of the year. And, we hope to see you again next year, as well as at the World Series.” Fargo hosts the Series in 2009.

Whatever the future holds — players, both past and present, as well as the coaches couldn’t help, but appreciate the significance in winning it this year, a season dedicated to former general manager and Tri-City baseball pioneer, Elmer Buttweiler, who passed away last September. Said manager Jeff Larsen: “Elmer was definitely with us here this weekend . . . He would be very proud. And it’s just wonderful that [Elmer’s daughters] Sandy, Susie and their families were here to share this with us in Elmer’s memory. Even the kids who didn’t know him can feel the energy he brings to us here. His seat up behind the plate is a constant reminder of his ongoing presence.”

Tri-City Red 7, DePere (Wis.) 3

Game 19, June 29, 2008

DePere	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	—	3	9	3
TC Red	3	0	1	3	0	0	x	—	7	9	1

Freed and Tetrick; Fuss, Schneider (4) and Soderlund. W-Freed (4-0). L-Fuss.

