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St. Michael claims state title for 2nd straight year

The Mikes again come back to win during final inning

By John Sherman

St. Michael repeated as the state Division I Legion Baseball champion by defeating Eden Prairie 5-4 at Mayo Field in Rochester Sunday, July 30.

For the second straight day, St. Michael needed runs in the last inning to win the game. Trailing 4-3 going into the top of the seventh, the Mikes put two runs on the board to pull ahead 5-4 on his by Kurtis Lekatz and Mason Varley.

In the bottom of the seventh, Mikes' manager Levi Fry brought shortstop Matthew Maulik, his 5-11, 175-pound team leader, to the mound for his first appearance of the tournament. Maulik got the three outs he needed for the save, although Eden Prairie's Ashton Farris hit a double down the right field line to add a dash of suspense.

Maulik was named winner of the Fred Wannamaker Award as



St. Michael Post 567 players celebrate Sunday after receiving the championship trophy from American Legion Department of Minnesota Commander Paul Hassing.

the tournament's most outstanding player at the conclusion of the awards ceremony.

"Winning this award is very special," Maulik said. "All of the hard work has paid off. The last two games, we were able to get runners on base and move them around. We have only two players returning from last year's state championship team. But I was confident we

could win it again. Every kid out there puts in a full effort."

Maulik described his relief appearance in the championship game: "My elbow has been hurting all week. But I knew what I had to do. I went out there and threw the ball as hard as I could."

Eden Prairie's Nick Macheledt was the Rob Wassenaar Award winner as the tournament's out-

standing pitcher. He threw a three-hit shutout in pool play to beat Minneapolis Post Office 2-0.

"The Wassenaar Award made me a little bit happier after losing in the championship game," Macheledt said. "It felt good to get a confidence booster. I really like how our team has come together this year. We get along well together, on and off the field."



In Roseau, Sleepy Eye Post 7 won the Div. II Sr. State Tournament, defeating Eden Valley-Watkins Posts 381 & 453 10-5. La Crescent captured third, and Roseau was consolation champ. Sportsmanship went to Glenwood/Lowery. The Tony Sipe Outstanding Player was Nolan Geislinger of Eden Valley-Watkins.



Stillwater Post 48 won the Div. I Jr. State Tournament in Burnsville, defeating Buffalo Post 270 by a score of 15-3. Buffalo also received the Ron Novich Sportsmanship Trophy. Hutchinson Post 96 placed third. Joseph Fredcove of Stillwater was named Jim Peck Outstanding Player of the Tournament.

Mankato American rallies to garner 3rd place

By John Sherman

Mankato American never gave up in the third-place game at state, even when it trailed Wayzata 5-0 with one out in the bottom of the seventh inning July 30 at Mayo Field in Rochester.

"We have awesome coaches, who always have our backs," Mankato American's lead-off batter Nicholas Werk said after his team received the Red Haddock third-place trophy. "They have never given up on us."

It was No. 7 Ethan Stangl, who delivered the game-winning gap shot in the bottom of the seventh to end the contest. The ball cleared the left-center field fence 360 feet from home plate.

This was Stangl's last at-bat in a good Legion baseball career, and how many American Legion players can say they finish with a home run?

"In that situation, you have to have confidence and a clear mind and let the bat do the work," Stangl said. "It felt really good off the bat, but I didn't know if the ball would clear the fence."

When he saw it leave the park, it was a rush because he knew the game was over.



Mankato Post 11 American players celebrate after their victory over Wayzata to capture third in the Div. I State Tournament.

Werk cited Mankato National's overall talent as the key to the season.

"The whole batting order, 1-9, can hit," he said. "When I'm struggling, I know the other guys will pick me up."

That comment from Werk seemed very modest since he hit the ball hard throughout the State Tournament.

Looking ahead, Werk has verbally committed to play college baseball for South Dakota State University. The good news for Mankato National's coaching staff is that Werk is only a junior. He

would love to return to the Legion team next summer.

Wayzata team leaders Jake Berkland and John Skoro were grateful for their season and pleased with the opportunity to play in the State Tournament.

"I love the guys on the team," Berkland said. "It is really a close group. Zach Pettit, Adam Deselich and Mason Pittman really stepped up this week in the lower half of the order."

Berkland was standing next to Skoro, one of Wayzata's best pitchers.

"I hate it when John is pitching because I never get any action at

shortstop," Berkland joked.

Skoro returned the favor: "When Jake is playing shortstop, it's not fair to the other team because he gets to every ball and makes every play."

While he was primarily a pitcher, Skoro sometimes played shortstop or center field.

"The great thing about the game today was that coach Marshall Dalziel put everyone in," Skoro said.

Skoro added one last bit of information on his own experience – pride in his .410 batting average.

Coach Dalziel thanked the players for a great season. All but one, catcher Fysher Rowan, is young enough to play again next season, including Berkland, Skoro and catcher Jonathan Priibula, who will all be playing college baseball.

"I am very proud of this team," Dalziel told the players. "The easiest way for me to recruit is for you to tell your buddies what a great experience you had this season. You earned your way to state, you got the exposure. We got everyone in the game today. I took out a pitcher who had a hot hand, and that's one million percent on me."

Matthew Welk was pitching a shutout for six innings before giving way to the bullpen, which couldn't hold the lead.

Sunday game summaries

GAME 31 3RD PLACE GAME

Wayzata
000 400 1 5 11 2
Mankato American
000 000 8 8 10 2

Welk, Smith (7) and Gullickson (7) and Rowan. Wojcik, Breite (7) and Kopesky. WP Breite, LP Gullickson.

Mankato National scored eight runs in the bottom of the seventh inning to surpass Wayzata 8-5 in the State Tournament third-place game at Mayo Field. Gaard Swenson hit a home run for Wayzata while Mankato American's Easton Stangl hit a grand-slam homer to win the game. Swenson and Jonathan Priibula had two hits each for Wayzata. Cael Willeaert of Mankato American led his club with two hits. Wayzata finished the season 22-19. Mankato American posted a season mark of 28-5.

GAME 32 CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

St. Michael 102 000 2 5 10 1
Eden Prairie 002 020 0 4 7 2

Barnard, Kay (5), Rathman (6), Maulik (7) and Glass. Dykstra and Miller. WP Barnard. LP Dykstra.

St. Michael scored two runs in the top of the seventh to edge Eden Prairie for the state Legion baseball title in Division I action at Mayo Field in Rochester July 30. Reid Barnard started for St. Michael and allowed two runs. Vinny Dykstra pitched a complete game for Eden Prairie. Singles by Kurtis Lekatz and Mason Varley gave St. Michael the runs they needed to win in the top of the seventh inning.



Stars of the Day

Gaard Swenson of Wayzata hit a home run and a single in his team's 8-5 loss to Mankato American in the third-place game at Mayo Field.

Matt Welk of Wayzata pitched six scoreless innings against Mankato American, but the Wizards' bullpen couldn't hold the lead in the bottom of the seventh as American brought home six runs.

Easton Stangl's dramatic grand-slam home run in the bottom of the seventh ended Mankato American's 8-5 victory over Wayzata. It was the final at-bat of Stangl's American Legion baseball career.

Logan Swalve of Mankato American had two hits and two RBIs in his team's 8-5 victory over Wayzata.

Matthew Maulik of St. Michael closed the state championship on the mound as his team defeated Eden Prairie 5-4 in the finals. For the rest of the tournament he played shortstop for the Mikes.

Ashton Farris of Eden Prairie led his team with a pair of doubles in the state championship game with St. Michael.

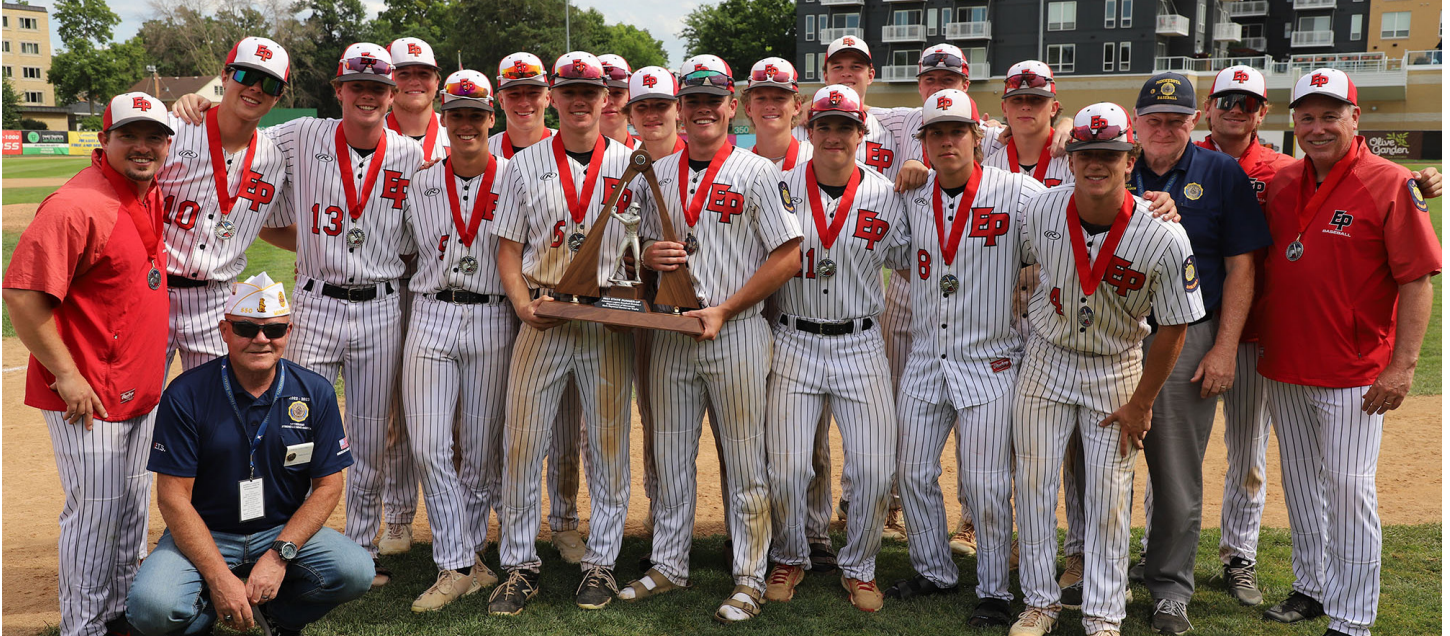
Kurtis Lakatz of St. Michael had a big hit in the last inning for the second day in a row as the Mikes edged Eden Prairie for the state championship.

Ken Skoug Championship Trophy



Here are the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I State Tournament Champions: St. Michael Post 567 Mikes. Front row kneeling, from left, are Miles Kay, Samuel Huber, Matthew Maulik, Ashtyn Groves, Mason Varley, Reid Barnard, Dillon Glass, Kurtis Lekatz and Ryan Luster. Back row standing are American Legion Department of Minnesota Commander Paul Hassing, St. Michael Coach Levi Fry, Joey Rathman, Colin Marshall, Evan Saunders, Grant Reidel, Kaleb Klinkhammer, Zackary Hlinsky, Evan Dombeck, Assistant Coach Reed Brown and Tournament Director Bruce Young.

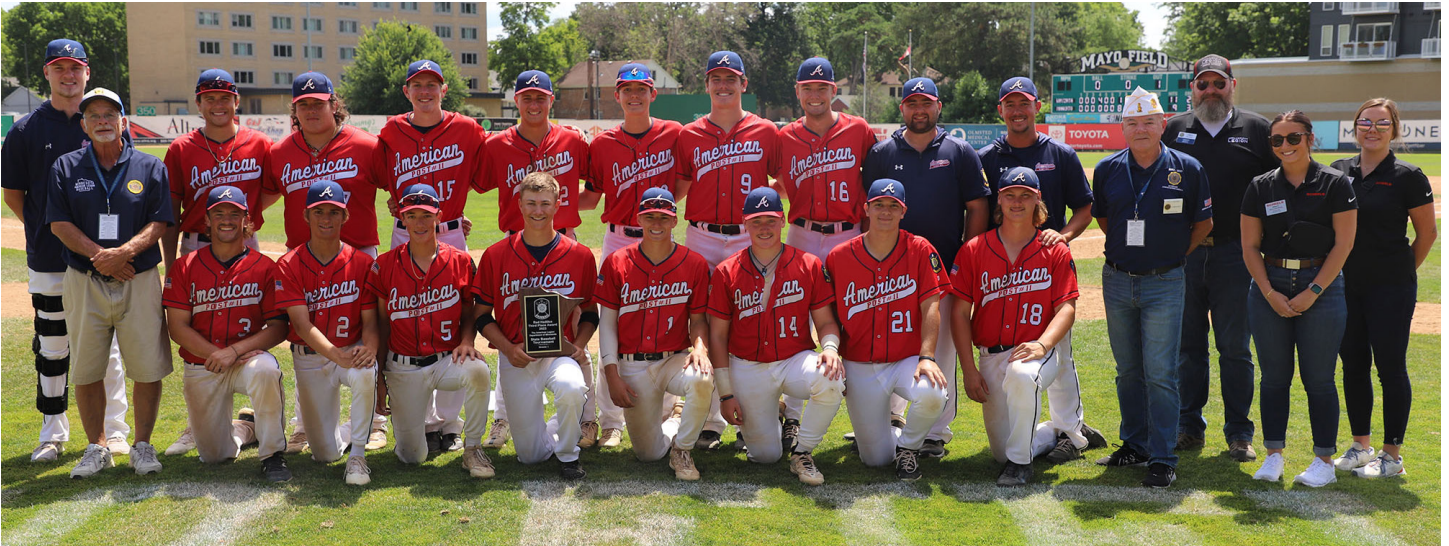
Mark Haywood Runner-up Trophy



Here are the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I State Tournament Runners-up: Eden Prairie. Down front is American Legion Department of Minnesota Commander Paul Hassing. Standing, from left, are Eden Prairie Coach Mike O'Brien, Nick Macheledt, Keegan Meadows, Joshua Kelly, Cade Hutchison, Joseph Flom, Ashton Farris, Carter Arneson and Nicholas Thompson. In the back row are Seth Tierney, Aiden Keranen, Joseph Goetze, Dawson Miller, Haddon Anderson, Vinny Dykstra, Connor Meadows, Jackson Hunter, Tournament Director Bruce Young, Assistant Coach Ben Shepard and Assistant Coach Tom Sullivan.



Red Haddock Third Place Award



Here is the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I State Tournament Third Place Team: Mankato Post 11 American. Front row, from left, are American Legion 2nd District Baseball Director Vern Kitzberger, Cael Willaert, Derek Rundle, Caeden Willaert, Easton Stangl, Nicholas Werk, Dylan Kopesky, Joseph Breiter, Riston Wojcik, American Legion Department of Minnesota Commander Paul Hassing and Scheels representative Hailey Kiffmeyer. Back row from left are Assistant Coach Jared Grams, Alexander Hennis, Ainsley Stubbs, Owen Studtman, Brayden Borgmeier, Peyton McCormick, Logan Swalve, Landon Metcalfe, Coach Collin Risting, Assistant Coach Mitch Kleist, 2nd District Commander James Olson and Scheels representative Kathryn Sands.

Fred Wannamaker Outstanding Player in the Tournament

Rob Wassenaar Outstanding Pitcher in the Tournament



From left are Tournament Director Bruce Young, recipient Matthew Maulik of the St. Michael Mikes, Scheels representatives Kathryn Sands and Hailey Kiffmeyer and American Legion Department of Minnesota Commander Paul Hassing.



From left are American Legion Department of Minnesota Commander Paul Hassing, recipient Nick Machleft, Scheels representatives Kathryn Sands and Hailey Kiffmeyer and Tournament Director Bruce Young.

Father David Moran Sportsmanship Award

From left are American Legion Department of Minnesota Commander Paul Hassing, 6th District Baseball Director Wes Thompson and Tournament Director Bruce Young. Thompson accepted the trophy on behalf of the post and its team (who had gone home by the end) and will present it at a later date.

