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Rylee Kara enjoys day of tourney firsts

By John Sherman

Even though her Osseo team lost a 13-12 decision to Austin Friday afternoon at Dick Putz Field, Rylee Kara stole the show.

She set several records this week, while becoming the first girl ever to play in the State Division I Legion Baseball Tournament. In the loss to Austin, she became the only girl ever to pitch in state and the only girl ever to strike out a hitter. Add the distinction of being the first Minnesota girl to record a scoreless and hitless inning.

There was just one more first she hoped for, and that was to win the game. In the bottom of the seventh with the score tied 12-12, she hit what appeared to be a sacrifice fly for the win. However, the umpires

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Osseo Post 172's Rylee Kara pitches in the seventh inning of a game against Austin Post 91 on Friday at Dick Putz Field.

Longtime coach Mike Karnas enters Hall of Fame

By Tim Engstrom

At the annual Div. I State Tournament banquet on Wednesday evening, Mike Karnas joined his father George Karnas as a member of the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Hall of Fame.

Karnas began his career as a Legion Baseball player in 1971. He also played in the State Tournament in St. Cloud in 1972. He played again in the State Tournament in 1973 and his team advanced to the Legion World Series.

He coached the Richfield Post 435 team for 31 years, along guys like Brian Kispert and Bob Small. His wife, Joan, often spent their anniversary at the ballfield as he taught young men about baseball and life. That included coaching their three kids.

Karnas' teams were District 5



District 5 Director Kyle Nutting, left, presents Mike Karnas with a plaque stating he is a 2020 inductee of the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Hall of Fame. The honor was given this year because the 2020 season was canceled.

champs a lot and played in the State Tournament 18 times, winning state in 1980 and 1985. They

were runner-up in 1981 and 1982. He amassed over 750 wins. And Karnas was the District 5 di-

rector from 2006-11. Today, Kyle Nutting of Richfield is the District 5 director, and he presented the induction at the banquet in front of 500 people at the River's Edge Convention Center in St. Cloud.

Karnas retired from coaching in 2018 after 42 years. He and his father, and his brother, also are in the Richfield High School Hall of Fame.

He handed out hundreds of nicknames to kids over the years, and many of them stick to this day. He taught sound fundamentals and gave sound advice such as, "Wear your hat the way you want your life to go."

Karnas came out of retirement this year to be second-base coach his grandson's T-ball team.

Nutting told the audience, "He will tell you that his team was undefeated. They were 0-0-12."

Web gem sends Willmar to championship round

By John Sherman

Going into the first game Friday at Joe Faber Field in St. Cloud, implications were clear for both Willmar and Fridley Gold. The winner would advance to the championship round. The loser would collect the last round of meal and prepare for the trip home.

Willmar surged to a 7-0 lead, but there was no quit in Fridley Gold, as the Eagles closed the margin to 7-6 in the bottom of the seventh. They had runners on second and third with nobody out and one run already across. A ground ball to shortstop Ian Koosman allowed Willmar to start a double play. Hunter Magnuson's relay to first was in plenty of time.

Suspense was still high with the tying run only 90 feet away. A Fridley Gold line drive appeared headed for left field, but Koosman timed his jump perfectly and speared the liner for the final out of the game.

West Central Tribune journalist Joe Brown grabbed Koosman for an interview after the game. The theme of the interview was something along the lines of, "Have you ever jumped that high before?"

"I tried to jump as high as I could," Koosman said.

And how did he feel when he felt the baseball in the webbing of his glove?

"Relieved."

Koosman, the grandnephew of New York Mets 1969 World Series pitcher Jerry Koosman, divides his time between shortstop and pitcher. "I like short and pitching equally. A pitcher has more control of the game."

Koosman entered the State Tournament with a 3-0 pitching record and a .444 batting average.



Ian Koosman of Willmar visits with West Central Tribune sports editor Joe Brown on Friday at Joe Faber Field.

He pitched the first day of the State Tournament and beat Minneapolis Gopher/Post Office Post 5-0 on a two-hitter.

However, there are times when a good play at

shortstop steals the spotlight, and that was the case Friday morning in St. Cloud.

It's also nice to see the hometown sports editor come to the State Tournament.

Osseo's Rylee Kara is a state champ weightlifter

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granted an appeal that the runner who scored from third on the fly to left had left early.

So the game resumed with the score still 12-12, and in the top of the eighth, Austin, facing a different pitcher this time, scored the go-ahead run.

Osseo appeared to be out of the game in the bottom of the seventh, trailing 12-6, but a three-run homer by Derek Nimz launched a comeback that tied the score.

Rylee was excited after the game.

"It was cool how we came back," she said. "I played youth baseball and VFW ball with the guys on the team, so Legion was the next step. I play second base this year, but in the past I played mostly third. I have had a few chances to pitch this summer."

"We don't treat Rylee any different than anyone else on the team," Osseo's star pitcher Wyatt Doblér



Rylee Kara fistbumps teammates after completing a successful inning of pitching that invigorated her Osseo team.

said. "She tells jokes and listens to our jokes."

"It was a nice surprise that I had the chance to pitch in a State Tournament game," Rylee said.

When she came into the game, Osseo was down 12-6. But she retired the side in the top of the sev-

enth, she pumped new life into her team. Suddenly, there was enough momentum to believe the Orioles could win.

Despite losing to Austin, Osseo won Pool 3 with a 2-1 record by beating Eden Prairie and Mankato American on Thursday. So Os-

seo advances to the championship bracket along with seven other teams.

"We want to win state and go to regionals," Rylee said. "This group has jelled together."

Asked if the Osseo High fastpitch softball coach had ever recruited her, Rylee said, "The coach is always peeking in on baseball practices. But I will never switch. I'm a baseball player."

Rylee is strong enough to compete against boys because she has put in the work in the weight room. "My other sport is Olympic weight lifting, and I won the state championship in 2020," she said.

With one more season of high school baseball eligibility remaining, Rylee said she hopes to play college baseball in the near future.

"If some school gave me a chance, I'd jump on that right away," she said.

Foley undefeated in Pool 4; Moorhead is second

By John Sherman

A potential three-way tie in the Pool 4 State Tournament standings was averted Friday, when Moorhead pounded Blaine-Ham Lake 19-6 and Foley remained undefeated at 3-0 with a 6-3 win over Eastview.

Moorhead will advance to bracket play Saturday as the No. 2 seed, after going 2-1 in Pool 4.

As one of the lower-enrollment teams in Minnesota Division I Legion Baseball, Foley has held its opponents in check so far. In addition to defeating Eastview 6-3, its other two pool victories were 4-2 over Moorhead and 2-1 over Blaine-Ham Lake.

Quentin Hegg pitched a complete game in the Moorhead Blues' victory over Blaine-Ham Lake, while his teammates pounded 15 hits.



A kid in uniform has a blast leading the Moorhead Blues onto the field on Friday.

Jacob Hendrickson's three-run homer in the top of the sixth blew the game open, then in the top of the seventh, he hit another three-run homer. He finished the game with seven RBIs. Hegg didn't just pitch well, he also went four-for-five at the plate with five RBIs. Ryan

Luthi stamped his name on the stat sheet with a four-for-five day.

In the final game of Pool 4, all of the runs came in the first inning. After Eastview scored three in the top of the first, Foley's first six batters in the bottom of the first scored.

Jack Wolfe had the big hit in the first for Foley, a two-run single.

Foley used six pitchers in the game, with none of them throwing more than 30 pitches, as a strategic move going into the championship bracket. Vincent Jurek had two hits for the winners.



Eden Prairie's Joey Flom ducks back to first base in a pickoff attempt in the first inning as Mankato American first baseman Jake Schreiber.

Mankato American moves on to 8-team bracket

The Mankato American team advanced to the championship bracket with a do-or-die 8-3 win over Eden Prairie Friday night at Dick Putz Field.

Starting pitcher Tanner Borchardt was the winner for Mankato American. "My curve and slider were working well tonight," he said.

Borchardt's fastball has been clocked at 89 miles per hour, so when the breaking pitches are sharp, he is hard to beat.

"I try to throw strikes and let my defense do the work," Borchardt

said.

Mankato American shortstop Grant Hermer talked about his team's emotional investment in the game.

"Our mindset is to compete and have fun playing the game we love," he said. "Our coaches preach staying loud and putting pressure on our opponents. It's great to be in the final eight at state, and we're not done yet."

Hermer added that there are good athletes on the team. "We try not to specialize in one sport," he said.



Ben Rosin winds up to pitch Friday at Dick Putz Field.

Rosin's pitching makes Tri-City a pool champ

By John Sherman

Rosin's pitching makes Tri-City Red a pool champ

Tri-City Red needed a win to take the Pool 1 championship Friday at Dick Putz Field, so head coach Nik Anderson handed the baseball to 6-4, 225-pound righthander Ben Rosin.

Seven innings later, Rosin had pitched a two-hitter to beat the Rosemount Irish 5-0. The win gave Tri-City Red a pool record of 2-1. Grand Rapids was also 2-1, but lost to Tri-City Red in a matchup the previous day.

"Ben is our ace," Coach Anderson said after the game. "There is no one I would rather have on the mound

in a game like this. Obviously, you always like to be in the driver's seat, but sometimes it's more fun to win when you're in a do-or-die situation like we were today."

Rosin is 3-1 this season on a deep Tri-City Red pitching staff. Anderson is never without a pitcher because he has 13 players who have pitched this year and six of them have wins.

Tri-City Red was 18-8 coming into the State Tournament and enters bracket play with an overall record of 20-9. Eight Tri-City Red hitters are averaging .300 or better, led by Reid Thurston with a .391 average. Paul Deikoff had the team lead in RBIs with 24 and Thurston had 21.

Host Chutes team makes memories in own town

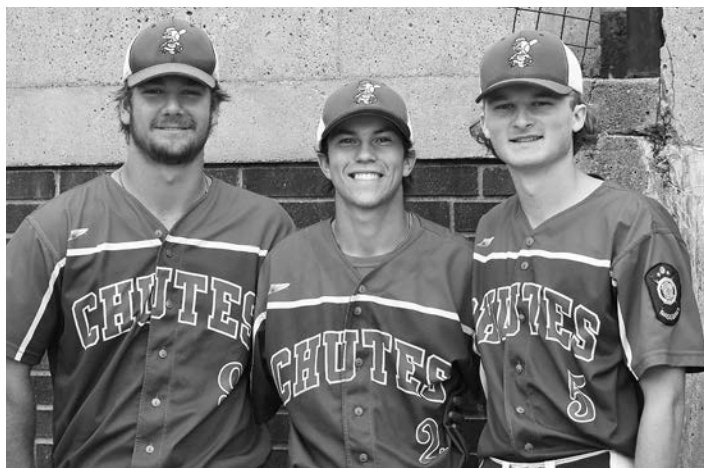
By John Sherman

St. Cloud Chutes Legion baseball is a traditionally strong program in Central Minnesota, so they came into the 2021 State Tournament as a formidable host team.

Chutes' quest for the state title ended in an 11-3 loss to Grand Rapids Friday morning at Dick Putz Field. Before that, the host team beat Tri-City Red 4-0 and lost to Rosemount 7-4. With a 1-2 record in Pool 1, Chutes fell one win short of making it to the championship bracket.

Andrew Rott pitched a three-hitter with five strikeouts in the victory over Tri-City Red. Ryan Janzen sparked the offense with two hits.

After Chutes bowed out of the tournament, Rott, Janzen and Logan Simones talked about making



St. Cloud Chutes seniors Andrew Rott, Ryan Janzen, Logan Simones stand next to the infield wall at St. Cloud's Dick Putz Field on Friday.

memories at Dick Putz and Joe Faber Fields.

"We're very lucky to play all

of our games at Putz and Faber," Simones said.

"This is our home, but we are

happy to share it with teams from around the state this week," Janzen said.

"All three of us like Putz better than Faber, but the fans like Faber better," Rott said.

The end of the 2021 season was a nostalgic time for Chutes players. "We have 11 seniors, and we've played together since ninth grade," Janzen said. "We're a close group."

Janzen and Simones each had two hits in the final game of the season Friday.

At Cathedral High, Rott, Janzen and Simones all played three sports. Rott plans to play baseball and football (as a running back or linebacker) at St. Scholastica. Janzen will play baseball at St. John's University. Simones will also attend St. John's but does not plan to play a sport.

Shortstop Preimesberger stabilizes Hopkins Flyers' defensive efforts

By John Sherman

During Hopkins High's run to the State Class AAAA Tournament this spring, senior Jack Preimesberger was a fixture at second base.

This summer, with high school teammate Maddox Mihalakis playing club baseball, Preimesberger is playing shortstop and anchoring the Hopkins Legion team.

"Shortstop is my natural position, my home," Preimesberger said after Hopkins beat Minneapolis Gopher/Post Office Post 5-2 Friday afternoon to finish pool play 3-0.

"Everyone on our team is a great guy," Preimesberger said, "and our coaches are the best I've ever had. They're authority figures, but they're also a lot like us."

Known for defense, Preimesberger is nevertheless a dependable hitter. He came into the State Tournament hitting .273 in 88 at-bats. Twenty-one of his 24 hits were singles, and he is still looking for his first home run of the season.

Hopkins rested some of its starters in the win over Gopher/Post Office Post, but Preimesberger went all the way, working with different infielders — Noah Ottmar at second base and Gabe Olson at third.



Shortstop Jack Preimesberger and coach Max Weesner stand in the dugout on Friday during a game.

"We have so many guys who can play," Preimesberger said. "It's nice to have a game where different guys can get involved."

Pitcher Will Tomanek, one of the team's youngest players, pitched a complete game, scattering seven hits.

Preimesberger said one of the benefits of playing against teams like Wayzata and Edina in the South Hennepin Legion League is:

"Those games get us ready for the end of the season."

Hopkins has won 14 of its last 15 games. The goal for the season is to win state and advance to the Central Plains Regional, Preimesberger noted. "We are playing great baseball," he said.

This fall, Preimesberger will begin his freshman year at Iowa State University, where he hopes to play club baseball.

Div. II teams Wadena and Tri-Town advance

SACRED HEART — Down in this community in the southwestern part of the state, eight Minnesota American Legion Baseball teams from the small towns are battling for the Div. II title.

Wadena defeated Luverne 2-0, advancing to play Tri-Town, which defeated Glenwood-Lowry. Tri-Town comprises players from the Tri-City school district in Montgomery, Le Center and Lonsdale.

Luverne and GW-L will meet on the consolation side of the bracket.

Scores for late Friday games were unavailable.



Find results and game times online

1. Enter "Minnesota American Legion Baseball" into any search field.
2. Go to the website, hover over "Playoffs and State Tournament"
3. Click on "Division I Sr."
4. Click on "See Tournament Bracket Schedule."