



The Gazette

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Semifinal games end in utmost dramatic fashion

Title game to be
Eden Prairie
vs. St. Michael

By John Sherman

The two finalists in the Minnesota State Division I American Legion Baseball Tournament have earned berths in the Central Plains Regional Aug. 2-6 in Rapid City, S.D.

Eden Prairie is moving on to the state finals and also the regional after a dramatic 10th-inning surge gave the Eagles a 6-2 victory over Mankato American Saturday at Mayo Field. It was EP's 29th win of the season against 7 losses.

Doubles in the 10th inning by designated hitter Seth Tierney and third baseman Jackson Hunter put the Eagles in position to win. Additional RBIs in the inning came on a suicide squeeze bunt by Cade Hutchison and an infield hit by Connor Meadows.

Aiden Keranen pitched four scoreless innings in relief to record the win

Describing his game-winning-



St. Michael Post 567 players celebrate Saturday night at Mayo Field after they pulled off a rally in the final inning to win 7-6.

hit, Jackson Hunter said, "It was a 1-and-2 count, and I knew their pitcher would come with the slider. We needed a run — with either a hit or a sacrifice fly — so I tried to get something in the air."

"Earning a berth in the regional is special," Eden Prairie's Flom said. "It is a chance to continue wearing the Eden Prairie uniform."

Hunter, Tierney, Joey Flom and

Ashton Farris each had two Eden Prairie's 10 hits. Mankato American had five hits — three by Cael Willaert and two by Landon Metcalfe.

Owen Studtmann, Mankato American's ace lefthander, pitched seven solid innings before giving way to Brayden Borgmeier.

A miracle rally in the sixth and seventh inning gave St. Michael its second straight berth in the

state championship game. The Mikes were the champions in 2022.

St. Michael trailed Wayzata 5-0 through five innings. In fact, lefthander Adam Deselich no-hit the Mikes for five frames.

Righthander Ashtyn Graves stuck with his game plan for St. Michael. He used a two-seam fastball against left-handed hitters and jammed right-handed hitters with his fastball that was on the gun at a high of 90 miles per hour. Though Graves allowed four runs in four innings, he was tough when he had to be in relief of starter Kaleb Klinkhammer.

St. Michael trailed 6-3 going into the bottom of the seventh inning. The Mikes drew a base on balls to start the inning and scored twice before Kurtis Lekatz came to the plate with bases loaded. He turned on the first pitch he liked and hit a hard ground ball past Wayzata's third baseman that easily scored runners from third and second. A wild celebration ensued.

Once the celebration died down, Lekatz said, "I wanted to drive the

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A robot paints the stripes on Mayo Field on Saturday.

What is this little robot?

By Tim Engstrom

Most of the time, humans stripe the ballfields of the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I State Tournament.

But, sometimes, a robot does it. It's called TinyMobileRobots, and the company that sells them in the United States is based in Atlanta.

Andy Olson with the Rochester Parks Department said it typically gets used for local soccer and football fields. He described how

to program it for baseball.

"So initially, you do your two foul lines, then the tip of your home. Then once you have it set, then it squares everything off. It does it all for you," he said. "And you can have it paint the home plate if needed."

The robot even will make field logos. They just have to be programmed for it. Look for our little friend on the field Sunday. It's not really taking a job of a staff member. Rather, it's helping them turn the field around quicker.

Recaps from Saturday games of the tournament

GAME 25

Sartell
000 001 0 1 5 1
Mankato American
121 023 x 9 12 0
Thompson, Ritter (5), Geiger (6) and Schlangen. Werk and Kopesky. WP Werk. LP Thompson.

Nicholas Werk pitched Mankato American to a 9-1 victory over Sartell in the state quarterfinals. Werk struck out seven and allowed five hits with only two walks. He helped his own cause by hitting a home run and a double at Mayo Field. Dylan Kopesky had a single and a double for the winners. Riston Wojcik also had two hits for Mankato American, as did Logan Swalve and Dylan Kopesky.. Kade Lewis hit a double for Sartell.

GAME 26

Prior Lake
030 000 2 5 6 2
Eden Prairie
310 032 x 11 11 1

Smith, Bodine (4), Schonhoff (5), Blattner (6) and Keeney. K. Meadows, Flom (6) and Miller. WP K. Meadows. LP Smith.

Eden Prairie's Seth Tierney and Prior Lake's Spencer Keeney matched three-run homers early in a quarterfinal game at Massey Field before Eden Prairie pulled away for an 11-5 win. Eden Prairie second baseman Nick Thompson scored four runs. He went one-for-two with three walks and scored four runs. Tierney, Ashton Farris and Joey Flom each had two hits for Eden Prairie. Flom closed the game in the top of the seventh by striking out the last three batters he faced, including the dangerous hitter, Keeney. Dominik Giancaro and Nick Slates each had two hits for Prior Lake.

GAME 27

Foley
110 100 0 3 3 3
Wayzata
200 313 2 9 12 3

Dahmen and Petersen. Berkland and Pribula. WP Berkland. LP Dahmen.

Wayzata head coach Marshall Dalziel gave his standout shortstop Jake Berkland his first mound start of the season, and the choice worked to perfection in a 9-3 win over Foley at Mayo Field. Berkland

pitched a three-hitter with only two walks. He tossed 66 strikes on 97 pitches in going the distance. Wayzata blew the game when Charles Gearen banked a 380-foot, opposite-field home run off the apartments beyond the right-field fence. Right fielder Gaard Swenson had a big day at the plate for Wayzata, going three-for-three with a run scored and two RBIs. Catcher Jonathan Pribula went two-for-three with two runs scored and one RBI. Seven other players, including Berkland, had hits for the winners. Foley's three hits were by Trey Emmerich, Bryce Gapinski and Aiden Micholski.

GAME 28

Rochester Redhawks
100 000 0 1 6 1
St. Michael
001 100 x 2 7 2

Condon, Prindle (6) and Prindle, Condon (6). Hlinsky, Kay (6), Saunders (7). WP Hlinsky. LP Condon.

In a classic pitchers' duel, St. Michael hung on in the seventh inning to fend off a Rochester Redhawks rally, 2-1. Hits were at a premium for both clubs in a well-played defensive ballgame. Zack Hlinsky was the winning pitcher for St. Michael. He pitched five strong innings. In a switch fans don't often see in Legion baseball. Zach Condon started on the mound for the Redhawks. In the sixth inning, he put on the catcher's gear and his catcher, Kyle Prindle took over on the mound. Prindle and Mason Leimbek each had two hits for the Redhawks. Ashtyn Groves and Kaleb Klinkhammer had RBIs for St. Michael. Sam Hruska had the only RBI for Rochester.

GAME 29

Eden Prairie 000
001 100 4 6 11 5
Mankato American 200 000
000 0 2 6 1

Arneson, Keranen (6) and Miller. Studtmann, Borgmeier (8) and Kopesky. WP Keranen. LP Borgmeier.

After falling behind 2-0 in the bottom of the first inning, Eden Prairie didn't allow another run over the next nine innings in a 6-2 win over Mankato American. The game went into extra innings tied 2-2. There were no runs for either team in the

Stars of the Day

Jake Berkland of the Wayzata Wizards made hit first start of the season and tossed a three-hitter to beat Foley 9-3 in the state quarterfinals. Berkland walked only two Falcons in going the distance.

Joey Flom, the Eden Prairie Eagles captain, had two hits and closed the game on the mound with three consecutive strikeouts in a 9=3 win over Prior Lake at Massey Field.

Nicholas Werk of Mankato American was the dominant player as his team ended Sartell's season 9-1. Werk hit a home run and a double and pitched a complete game.

Seth Tierney of Eden Prairie hit a 410-foot home run over the high center-field wall at Massey Field to launch his team's 11-5 victory over Prior Lake at Massey Field.

Dylan Kopesky of Mankato American went two-for-three with a double and two RBIs in his team's 9-1 victory over Sartell at Mayo Field.

Charles Gearen of Wayzata hit a 380-foot home run to the opposite field to finish off Foley 9-3 in a 9-3 Wizards victory over Foley at Mayo Field.

Riston Wojcik of Mankato American had a pair of hits in Mankato American's 9-1 victory over Foley at Mayo Field.

Gaard Swenson of Wayzata went three-for-three at Mayo Field as Wayzata advanced to the state semifinals with a 9-3 victory over Foley.

Zack Hlinsky was the winning pitcher as St. Michael held off a strong challenge from the Rochester Redhawks 2-1 at Massey Field. He allowed four hits and one run in pitching 5 and 1/3 innings. He struck out 10 and walked none.

Kyle Prindle of the Rochester Redhawks went two-for-three at the plate during his team's season-ending loss to defending state Division I champion St. Michael.

eighth and ninth innings, but then Eden Prairie broke loose for four runs in the top of the 10th. Joey Flom led off with a single, which was followed by Seth Tierney's 390-foot drive off the wall in center field..Ashton Farris received an intentional pass to load the bases. Jackson Hunter then lined a 350-foot double to right-center for two runs. Another run came in on a suicide squeeze bunt by Cade Hutchison. An insurance run scored on Connor Meadows' infield hit. Relief pitcher Aiden Keranen took it from there, retiring the side in the bottom of the inning.

GAME 30

Wayzata 020 300 1 6 8 0

St. Michael 000 003 4 7 6 2
Deselich, Smith (6) and Pribula. Klinkhammer, Graves (4) and Glass. WP Graves. LP Smith.

St. Michael won a return trip to the Central Plains Regional by defeating Wayzata 7-6 with a late-inning comeback.

Ashtyn Graves earned the win in relief of St. Michael starter Kaleb Klinkhammer.

Kurtis Lekatz was the hitting star with a two-for-three performance. He drove in the tying and winning runs in the bottom of the seventh with a ground single over the third-base bag. Evan Saunders also had an RBI hit in the seventh. Kyle Boutwell went three-for-four for Wayzata.

Baseball soared 280 feet to get the runner out

Right fielder and catcher connect

By Tim Engstrom

The score for the game between Sartell Post 277 and Mankato Post 11 American on Saturday was 4-0 in the top of the fourth inning, and Sartell was trying to get on the scoreboard.

The fans at Mayo Field were about to be treated to one of the most exciting plays in the game of baseball.

Sartell had a man on second and third, and there was one out. Their batter hit one deep to Mankato right fielder Logan Swalve, who got under it in the grass before the warning track and caught it. The baserunner on third tagged up and took off for home.

Swalve hurled the baseball 280 feet to Mankato catcher Dylan Kopesky, who tagged the runner.



Mankato American right fielder Logan Swalve and catcher Dylan Kopesky smile for the camera during their quarterfinal game against Sartell on Saturday.

Everyone waited on the ump's call. Out!

Fans erupted in cheers. Swalve ran in from the outfield and jumped high on a fellow player between second and third to celebrate, then gave

Kopesky high ten by the dugout.

"It was an exciting moment to blank them that inning," Kopesky said.

American went on to win the game 9-1.

Many of the Mankato players sport moustaches, including these two. What's up with that?

"It's a good laugh thing," Swalve said. "We've been working at it all year. No reason to stop it."

The entire team has been having fun at state. They've enjoyed the slide and swimming at the Best Western pool. They played some video games in the rooms. They have played with joy on the field.

"This is the most fun I have ever had playing baseball," Swalve said. "I would take this over high school."

He said the team has a chemistry that is reflected on the field.

"The pace of play is integral. We feed off of each other," Swalve said.

The team's base school is Mankato East, and Swalve and Kopesky are both from Eagle Lake, which is a town in the district. That fantastic play was a toss from one Eagle Lake kid to another.

Eden Prairie dines on watermelon on way to win

By John Sherman

On the way to an 11-5 state quarterfinal victory over Prior Lake on Saturday, Eden Prairie shared its secret for hydrating.

"My mom brings watermelon slices to every game, and that does the trick," said Jackson Hunter, the team's No. 1 pitcher, who also plays third base.

As he munched on watermelon before closing out Prior Lake in the seventh inning, Joey Flom, who usually plays shortstop for Eden Prairie, watched the Prior Lake center fielder make a great catch to retire teammate Cade Hutchison. "Even our outs are hard-hit balls."

Even after Prior Lake scored two runs in the top of the seventh, Flom stayed cool and struck out the last three batters of the game.



Eden Prairie's Jackson Hunter eats watermelon while perched on a fence on Saturday.

Good pitching by Keagan Meadows and a 410-foot home run by

Seth Tierney were other keys to Eden Prairie's win. Meadows was

the winning pitcher in his duel with Prior Lake's ace, Tyus Smith.

Tierney's homer in the first inning off of Smith cleared the 377-foot sign in center field. Some of the Rochester locals said it might have been the longest home run at Dale Massey Field this season. But it may not have been Tierney's longest homer of the summer. He has 10 of them, including several other 400-foot bombs.

Eden Prairie finished the regular season, plus the substate games, ranked first in the Scheels State-Wide Legion Baseball Poll. Tierney gave first-year coach Mike O'Brien for providing a winning team culture. "I love this team," said Tierney. "This is one of the favorite teams I've played on. That comes 100 percent from the coach."



Rochester Post 92 Commander Gilmore tosses out the first pitch on Saturday morning.



Minnesota American Legion Baseball volunteers Jon Sands and Madison Bunnell share a laugh Saturday in the pressbox.



Aston Farris and other Edin Prairie players celebrate victory after a nail-biting 10-inning game Saturday.

2 teams punch tickets to regional tournament

Continued from front page

ball. It was right there, and I didn't think about it."

Graves said, "I have faced Wayzata a lot of times over the years. When we were behind, I just tried to keep my composure."

"Our guys are absolute dogs," coach Reed Brown said. "We didn't get a hit in the first five

innings, but we did a great job in the sixth and the seventh."

"Our bats were not on today," said Mikes' manager Levi Fry. "We have been scoring a lot of runs all season. I told the boys, if you want it, you have to go and get it."

With their win, the Mikes will soon be on the way to Rapid City, S.D. for the Central Plains Regional Aug. 2-6.



Wayzata shortstop Jake Berkland took the mound to help his team defeat Foley on Saturday at Mayo Field.

Wayzata's Jake Berkland does what it takes to win

By John Sherman

During the Wayzata High School season, coach Bobby DeWitt called senior shortstop Jake Berkland "the most competitive player I've ever coached."

It was the same during the high school basketball season when the 5-10 Berkland guarded a 6-foot-6 player from Park Center in a Trojan victory in the state-championship game.

Berkland had not started a Legion game on the mound until he toed the rubber against Foley in the state quarterfinals Saturday. He pitched a three-hitter with two walks as Wayzata advanced 9-3.

"I knew that the top of Foley's

lineup is very solid," Berkland said after his complete game performance. "I had been throwing a fastball and a curve [in relief appearances this year]. Before the game today, I decided I needed a changeup, so I did a little work with [pitching coach] Blake Ask to get one ready."

The changeup worked like a charm as he kept most of Foley's hitters guessing.

This is Berkland's first season of Legion baseball. What has it been like?

"I absolutely love Legion," said Berkland, who came over from travel ball. "Coach Marshall Dalziel is everything I thought he'd be."

Division II report from Roseau

In the State Division II Tournament at Roseau Saturday, the title game will be Edin Valley-Watkins vs. Sleepy Eye.

Edin Valley-Watkins downed Glenwood-Lowry 2-1, and Sleepy Eye defeated La Crescent 4-3.

The host team won the consolation championship. Roseau defeated Dilworth-Glyndon-Felton by a score of 6-2.



Tom Senne, coach of the Rochester Redhawks, also led the committee from Rochester that hosted the tournament on behalf of the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Committee. The tournament has turned out to be another success.

Sunday action

Mankato Post 11 American vs. Wayzata Post 118 Wizards, 10:30 a.m., Mayo Field
Winner takes Red Haddock Third Place Award

Edin Prairie Eagles vs. St. Michael Post 567 Mikes 1:30 p.m., Mayo Field
Winner takes Ken Skoug Championship Trophy
Runner-up receives Mark Haywood Runner-up Trophy

