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Osseo stuns Mankato 5-2 with late comeback

Orioles advance to the finals on a 3-run homer

By John Sherman

Osseo is one of the teams that was in and out of Scheels' Statewide Legion Baseball poll this summer.

But now the Orioles are definitely in - in the state-championship game that is. A dramatic 5-2 comeback win over favored Mankato National Saturday afternoon at Gleason Fields in Maple Grove gave Osseo the first spot in the state finals on Sunday. It was a three-run homer over the center field fence by Gavin Phenow that ended the contest. On base ahead of him were Gavyn Krzoska and Brayden Haag, who both had RBI hits.

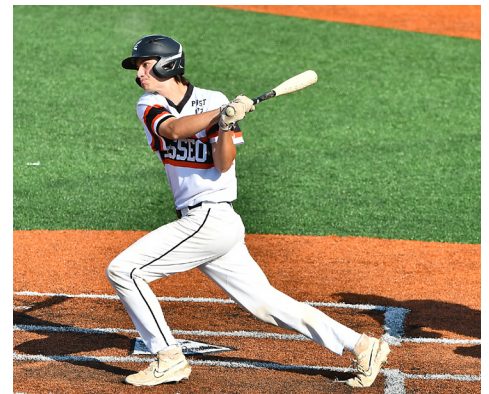
Haag's double might have scored Krzoska with the winning run, but the ball took a high

bounce on the artificial turf over the fence. So Krzoska remained at third.

"I didn't think the ball was gone at first," Phenow said when asked about his homer. "But I thought it was deep enough to score a run. Mankato National is a good team with bats, speed and pitchers who throw strikes. We were down 2-0 going into the last inning, but everyone still believed we'd win."

Osseo had nine hits in the game, including two each from Krzoska, Haag and Isaac Johnson. Cooper Skov was the winning pitcher, allowing six singles

"We have the pitching depth and we can hit," said Osseo's Eli Larson, who pitched a victory earlier in the tournament. "I don't know how to put today's rally into words."



Osseo third baseman Gavin Phenow has the perfect swing to beat Mankato National in a state semifinal game at Gleason Fields in Maple Grove on Saturday.

Director of coaches' association loves Legion ball

By John Sherman

Anderson notes how high school and Legion ball work together

Craig Anderson, Executive Director of the Minnesota High School Baseball Association, never gets enough baseball.

For the second year in a row he is serving as a site coordinator at the State American Legion Division I Tournament. The 2023 State Tournament was a lot closer to Anderson's hometown of Pine Island with headquarters in Rochester. This year, he traveled all the way to Delano to work at Legion ballgames.

Anderson sees the synergy between high school and American Legion Baseball, based on how the programs mesh in Pine Island.

"Legion Baseball gives high school players twice the opportunity to have fun," Coach Anderson said. "Some of the players I coached in high school had dads who are Legion members. They were great partners in the summer program."

Pine Island won the State Division II American Legion title in 1995. It is always nice to win



Craig Anderson is the executive director of the Minnesota High School Baseball Coaches Association and is an advocate of American Legion Baseball.

championships, but the experience of Legion ball offers more than that with its emphasis on sportsmanship, teamwork and Americanism.

"I have always had a lot of respect for the American Legion," Coach Anderson said. "My dad was a Purple Heart recipient in World War II. He was wounded in France on the sixth day of the invasion. After he recovered, he returned home to the farm and raised six kids."

As one of those kids, Craig Anderson was

a star athlete at Mabel-Canton High School in Southern Minnesota. He took his baseball skills to Winona State University where he became captain and an All-Northern Intercollegiate Conference pitcher. He graduated from Winona in 1975. Anderson's wife Sue was his "high school sweetheart."

To be able to stay in coaching as long as I have, you need a great partner," Anderson said. "Sue is fantastic."

In addition to coaching baseball for 36 years at Pine Island, Anderson taught sixth grade and coached eighth-grade football.

He coached Legion ball all but two summers, when he took time off to spend more time with his two young children.

After retiring from education, Anderson became executive director of the high school baseball coaches group.

"Minnesota has great baseball," he said. "There are a lot of good high school and college programs." Not to mention the state's national-leading 377 Legion baseball teams.

Asked to describe the place of Legion ball in the overall scheme, Anderson said, "It's great to see players extend their high school careers in the summer."

Step right up and get your game summaries

Find the tournament brackets on the mobile app. Search for "Minnesota Legion Baseball."

FRIDAY GAMES

GAME 19

Mankato Nat'l 010 200 1 4 6 0
Sartell 000 000 0 0 2 1
Magers and Timm. Johnson and Lahr. WP Magers. LP Timm.

Wilson Magers dominated on the mound for Mankato National, striking out 14 and allowing two hits in a win over Sartell. Austin Lahr pitched a complete game for Sartell. No player from either team had more than one hit. Magers and catcher Adam Timm hit doubles for the winners.

GAME 20

Rochester 102 000 0 3 4 2
Bemidji 002 002 0 2 4 3
Neadeau and G. Ganske. Kober. M. Johnson (7) and Ryan. WP Kober. LP Neadeau.

The Rochester Redhawks won their way to the championship bracket with a 3-2 win over Bemidji Friday at St. Michael Lower Field. Winning pitcher Spencer Kober allowed three hits in six innings. Peyton Neadeau limited Rochester to four hits in throwing a complete game for Bemidji.

GAME 22

Osseo 200 200 0 4 8 0
Champlin 100 001 0 2 7 1
Partanen and Krzoska. Wylie, Vendel (4) and McGee. WP Partanen. LP Vendel.

In a well-played game at Osseo Friday, Oriole pitcher Logan Partanen struck out 11 Champlin hitters in a 4-2 win. Jorda Sivoravong and Gavyn Krzoska each had two hit for Osseo. Second baseman Brockton Sandell led Champlin with a four-for-four night.

GAME 23

Hastings 100 001 0 2 3 4
Sartell 001 060 x 7 9 1
Odman, Nelson (6) and Teigland. Scheffler, W. Thompson (2) and Lahr. WP Thompson. LP Odman.

Will Thompson pitched 5 2/3 innings of one-hit ball in Sartell's 7-2 win over Hastings Friday night. Shortstop Brady Thompson was three-for-four for Sartell.

GAME 24

Shakopee 002 00 2 5 0
Fridley Gold 217 11 12 14 0
McGee, Heller (2), Strait (3), Ho (4) and Schaust, Bouquet (3) and Heller, C. McGee. WP Schaust. LP Heller.

Fridley Gold blitzed Shakopee 12-2 in five with a 14-hit attack. Matthew Galatzer,

Brayden Morel, Evan Hinnenkamp and Colin Blake each had two hits. Evan Schaust and Ian Bouquet combined on a five-hitter.

SATURDAY GAMES

GAME 25

Mankato 040 121 1 9 13 1
Rochester 021 020 1 6 7 2
Hoehn, Maes (4) and Timm. Sadowy, Dahl (1), Condon (4) and Ryan.

Wilson Magers led Mankato National with three hits in a game at Maple Grove that was marked by good hitting on both side. Ethan LaBrash had two hits to lead the Rochester Redhawks' attack.

GAME 26

Burnsville 001 101 1 3 7 3
Osseo 005 111 x 8 13 4
Woelfel, Heger and Galvin. Haag and Krzoska. WP Haag. LP Heger

Osseo's 13-hit attack was too much for Burnsville in a morning game Saturday at Osseo High. Tyler Rose, Brenden Kranz, Isaac Johnson and Cooper Skov each had two hits for the Orioles. One of Johnson's hits was a home run. AJ Galvin had two hits for Burnsville.

GAME 27

Farmington 202 000 4 8 14 1
Eden Prairie 000 000 0 0 2 2
Minnick and Sullivan. Johnson, Keranen (4) and Miller. WP Minnick. LP Johnson.

Farmington's bats were hot

with 14 hits in an elimination game against Eden Prairie Saturday afternoon at Osseo High. Left fielder Trevor Rasmusson of Farmington knocked the cover off the baseball by going five-for-five. Josh Berreth added three hits.

GAME 28

Fridley G. 000 004 0 4 10 1
Forest L. 101 410 x 7 11 0
Blake, Heifort (3) and Hand, Franczak (5). Anderson, Goehner (2) and Mueller.

Fridley Gold and Forest Lake combined for 21 hits in an elimination game at Maple Grove Saturday with Forest Lake prevailing 7-4. Kellen Westphal had three hits, including a homer for Fridley Gold. Gavin Goehner, Nolan Dumonceaux, Tucker Sibbald and Jacob Tobritzhofer had two hits each for Forest Lake.

GAME 29

Mankato 001 001 0 2 6 1
Osseo 000 000 5 5 9 3
Olson, Chamberlain (4), Schreiber (5) and Timm. Skov and Krzoska. WP Skov. LP Schreiber.

Gavin Phenow's home run ended the game in the bottom of the seventh against Mankato National Saturday in Maple Grove. Isaac Johnson, Gavyn Krzoska and Brayden Haag each had two hits for Osseo and Cooper Skov pitched a complete game for the win. Six players had one hit each for Mankato National.



Barry Wohler, head boys basketball coach at Orono High School, speaks during the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. II State Tournament Banquet at Olivia American Legion Post 186. His hometown is nearby in Bird Island.



Joe Bares of Jordan Post 3 is inducted into the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Hall of Fame at the Div. II State Tournament, being held in Bird Island. With him are his wife, Holly, and son, Zach. Absent is his daughter, Haille Jo.

We asked 6 baseball moms:

By Tim Engstrom

What is it like following your American Legion Baseball team all summer?



Jessica DuPage

Son: #20 Mason DuRose, 1st Base & Pitcher
Team: Mankato Post 11 National

"It has been an absolute joy. We have a great group of kids and parents who have stuck together since the boys were 10 years old. We are stuck hotels every weekend, and these parents have been amazing."



Charlene Beavers

Son: #3 Carson Beavers, Center Field & 1st Base
Team: Rochester Post 92 Redhawks

"For this team, it has been particularly exciting because this because they have never been playing better as boys and now men. After this year, they will go different directions, graduating and moving on."



Samantha Lee

Son: #5 Keegan Lee, Pitcher & Catcher
Team: Forest Lake Post 225 Rangers

"It's fun because we get to do it together. We have a great group of families. We traveled a ton this summer. I basically lived in a hotel. It allows you to see new places and new ballparks."



Shari Rantz

Son: #11 Jake Rantz, 2nd Base & Pitcher
Team: Fridley Post 303 Gold Eagles

"It's exciting to be involved as a parent. We see other families. We got to see all the nostalgic ballparks. We got to see all the other kids on other teams that they played against as kids."



Summer Krzoska

Son: #17 Gavyn Krzoska, Right Field & Pitcher
Team: Osseo Post 172 Orioles

"It's just been a lot of fun watching the team as a whole. Every game a different player steps up and makes the play. We have a great group of boys who support each other. No matter the outcome, we are happy with the season."



Beth Stember

Son: #49 Connor Stember, Pitcher & 2nd Base
Team: Farmington Post 189 Tigers

"I like watching the boys develop as players and as people. The ballparks have been interesting. Legion Baseball has some great coaches who support the kids and help them grow as a team."

A coach for 34 years, Young makes Hall of Fame

Third District American Legion Baseball Director Bruce Young of Shakopee is this year's only new Legion Baseball Hall of Famer.

In addition to running the Third District, Young is the State Division I Tournament Director.

Young's career as a Legion coach began in 1986 with Minneapolis Hellenic Post.

"I enjoyed coaching the Minneapolis kids," Young said. "My son Joe was a Minneapolis kid and a started coaching him in youth baseball."

During his early years as a Legion coach, Young was a college basketball and baseball assistant coach. He worked in both sports at Macalester College and was also a baseball assistant at Concordia University in St. Paul.

Young's Legion coaching career took a new direction when he applied for the Apple Valley job. "My friend Larry Engen lived in Apple Valley and told me they were looking for a Legion coach," Young recalled. So the contact was made with Apple Valley Legion Athletic Director Dick LeSavage.

Young's reputation as a college coach helped



Third District Baseball Director Bruce Young visits with Eden Prairie's Charlie Becker on Saturday at Osseo Memorial Field.

him land that job. He quickly put Apple Valley on the map in the 1990s and won the State Division I Tournament in 2002 when the tourney was held in Marshall.

"That team defeated Excelsior in the finals," Young said. "Our guys were thrilled to win it."

Apple Valley finished second in state in 2004, 2007 and 2009 to earn berths in Legion regional tournaments.

"It was a tremendous experience watching our kids enjoy success in the regionals," Young said. "We had a great coaching staff with people like Al Newman, Bill Goodman, Jeff Buck, Tom Butler, Gregg Bjorklund, Rod Teichrow, Patrick "Sarge" Ryan and Jeremy Engen. They worked with the kids on baseball fundamentals and taught the right values. I couldn't have done it without them."

Young said he appreciates the teamwork among state Legion baseball directors as much as he appreciated his working relationships with assistant coaches. It has been his pleasure to work with Randy Schaub, Jim Peck, Vern Kitzenberger, Wes Thompson and Gail Kalata.

"I think back to the days when Darwin Berg and Mike Perry were State Baseball Directors," Young said. "I respected them and learned from them. Above all, they wanted to make the State Tournament a great experience for the coaches, players and fans."

SCHEELS
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Peck's career in youth baseball is a marathon

He made the decision to volunteer 61 years ago, and Legion Baseball is better for it

By John Sherman

Jim Peck, a Minnesota youth baseball coach and volunteer for 61 years, was genuinely surprised to receive a huge plaque from the national level of The American Legion during the State Tournament Banquet at Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172.

"You don't volunteer to win awards," Peck said. "You volunteer to make this a good program for the kids."

Peck's speech was brief. Throughout his career, he has focused on the teams, coaches and fans rather than himself.

How did Peck first become involved in youth baseball?

"My dad believed in volunteerism, and I guess I followed his example," Peck said.

When Peck moved into the Minnetonka area in 1964, he looked at some of the local places where he might volunteer and found out that there was a baseball program in East Tonka.

"Baseball seemed like a place that I could impact the lives of young people," he said. Along with other volunteers, Peck trained East Tonka boys to be winners on the field and winners in life. Many of the boys he coached still stay in touch. Some of them called after Peck received his latest award from Legion Baseball.

Peck and co-coach Guy Blessing guided two East Tonka teams to Babe Ruth Baseball state championships in the early 1970s, then Peck made the jump to American Legion Baseball, which serves players 16-19 years of age.

"I had heard many good things about American Legion Baseball," he said. "And I had a group of 16-year-old players who were moving up from Babe Ruth."

Before Peck coached Excelsior Legion, the team had more players from The Blake School than from Minnetonka High. That changed under Peck as he brought in some of the top Minnetonka players, including Lane Brettingen, Mitchell Benson, Chris Buck and Jim Stubbs.

Peck took Excelsior to the State Legion Tournament for the first time in 1975. Excelsior's first state championship had to wait until 1991 when the tournament was played in Mankato.

In all, Peck has led three Excelsior teams to state titles, the latest one in 2019. "You wish you can win every year," he said. "But there are so many good teams in the state."

Peck handed the Excelsior head coaching job to Rob Hager several years ago, but is still general manager of the Excelsior Legion program, which also includes a second Legion team and a Junior Legion squad. Hager was head coach on the 2019 state-championship team with Peck in uniform as his assistant.

"Jim sometimes talks about retiring from baseball," Bruce Young, the State Division I Tournament Director said. "But what would we do without him. Jim gets things done the old-fashioned way. He picks up the phone and calls people – that's how he operates."

Most Legion fans have seen Peck at one time another this week. Stadium steps that he climbed two at a time a decade ago are harder to



Jim Peck, a longtime member of the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Committee, has spent many years improving the game for ballplayers and directing the Excelsior Legion program.

negotiate now. The old coach often walks in short steps with his hands behind his back for better balance. He wears braces on both knees as the result of the active, sports-oriented life he lives.

Peck was an amazing high school athlete in Deer River, Minn., winning 15 varsity letters between football, basketball and track. His summers were devoted to playing town team baseball, starting with his debut at the age of 14.

This fall, Peck will be inducted in the Deer River Athletic Hall of

Fame. It is one of many awards received during his career. Some of the others are: the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Hall of Fame, the Minnesota Amateur Baseball Hall of Fame and the American Amateur Baseball Congress Hall of Fame. He also won the "Eleven Who Care Award" from KARE-11 Television.

Peck's leadership has helped Minnesota build the largest Legion Baseball program in the country with 377 teams. As the state's No. 1 baseball ambassador, he personally brings new teams into the fold each year.



Joey Goetze of Eden Prairie tries to turn a double play against Farmington on Saturday at Osseo Memorial Field. Farmington won the game 8-0 to advance to the semifinals.



Forest Lake players ham it up in the dugout on Saturday during their 7-4 victory over Fridley Gold at Gleason Fields in Maple Grove. Farmington and Forest Lake today continue a game suspended on Saturday because of lightning.