



The Gazette

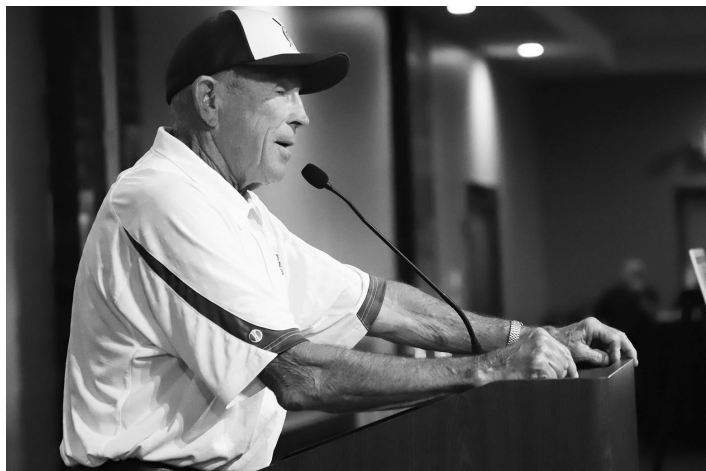
A Publication of
Minnesota American Legion Baseball

Vol. 27, No. 1

Rochester, Minnesota

Thursday, July 27, 2023

Baseball great Tink Larson gives life lessons



Tink Larson spoke at the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I State Tournament Banquet on Wednesday. The Kasson native is known across southern Minnesota for his love of baseball and many years shaping players. A ballfield in Waseca is named for him. He said it was his first time speaking.

Coaching legend urges players to give back to baseball when they get older

By Tim Engstrom

It is the first time in 20 years that Rochester has hosted the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I State Tournament, and they booked a legend to speak.

At first, Tink Larson declined to speak, but then he agreed to do it. He had a message for players.

Be a good teammate.

Keep your grades up.

Send a video of your skills to colleges but keep it to one or two minutes, not five or 10.

Division II colleges have limited scholarships available. Don't expect to receive a full-ride scholarship. Shoot for a partial.

"If you want to get better, you're not going to get better sitting in the house playing games on those newfangled gadgets they have," he said.

He called on players to prepare, to be persistent, to outwork others and to display integrity.

And when they get older, give back to baseball by being a coach, an umpire, an announcer, a scorekeeper or even a father who plays catch with their kids.

Larson said players who leave their American Legion teams are letting down the friends from their community, and it hurts the local program and, hence, future baseball players.



Past State Commander Tom Fernlund, right, announced that Osseo-Maple Grove Post 172 was Post of the Year.



State Baseball Director Randy Schaub, right, announced Doug Ruter of Willmar as 2023 Coach of the Year.



Emcee Jason Fink, left, stands with 2023 Coach of the Year Lon Berberich of Le Sueur-Henderson.



District 2 Director Vern Kitzberger, left, announced Jamie Mulvihill of Mankato National as 2023 Coach of the Year.

Eden Prairie tops the Scheels ranking

The ranking committee came out with its final Scheels ranking right before the tournament began, and Eden Prairie #1 came out on top.

The ranking committee all season long has been Div. I Director Bruce Young of Shakopee, Director Assistant Jim Peck of Chanhassen, Baseball Secretary Tim Engstrom of Bloomington, longtime sports journalist John Sherman of Apple Valley.

"We like to remind folks that this is a ranking, not a poll, and that we try our best," Young said.

Here are the Top 20:

1. Eden Prairie #1
2. Mankato American
3. Sartell
4. St. Michael Mikes
5. Edina
6. Champlin
7. Tri-City Red
8. Northfield
9. Wayzata
10. Osseo
11. Anoka
12. Hamline Purple
13. Bemidji
14. Foley
15. Delano
16. Farmington
17. Elk River
18. Hastings
19. Rochester Redhawks
20. Prior Lake

These players bring impressive stats

By John Sherman

At every level of baseball, from the Little Leagues to the Major Leagues, fans love to track statistics of their favorite players.

Some of the stats for players in this week's Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I Tournament are impressive, and sometimes even eye-popping.

Let's take a look at some of the individuals who have put up big numbers prior to state I think you'll be impressed.

While Major League batters hardly ever achieve .350 batting averages for a season, the Legion players in this year's event seem to have no trouble surpassing that plateau. Take Jack Seleski of Hastings for instance, who comes to stat with a .556 average on 21 hits in 32 at-bats. Also above the .500 mark is Minneapolis Post Office shortstop Milan Arado, who has 23 hits in 42 at-bats for a .548 mark. Austin Koep leads the Northfield River Rats with a .550 average on 22 hits in 40 at-bats.

Almost every team in the tournament has at least one .400 hitter in the lineup. Other high marks belong to Bemidji's Ben Corradi .451, Delano's Cade Bruett .453, Duluth's Jack Teachworth .417, Foley's Trey Emmerich .467, Hastings' Jarod Neuville .469, Mankato American's Ainsley Stubbs .429, Matthew Johnson of Prior Lake .451, Kyle Prindle of the Rochester Redhawks .469, Kade Lewis of Sartell .417, Landon Both of Tri-City Red .422 and Dillon Glass of St. Michael .408.

Just below the .400 mark, and hitting .387, is shortstop and captain Jake Berkland of Way-



Sun photo by John Sherman

Kaleb Klinkhammer, shown here in his high school uniform, heads the St. Michael pitching staff with a 4-0 record.

zata, who comes to state with a team-leading 14 stolen bases.

In the pitching department, there are several undefeated pitchers leading their teams. Nicholas Werk of Mankato American is having an outstanding year with a 7-0 record and teammate Cael Willaert is 5-0. Jackson Hunter of Eden Prairie brings a 6-0 record to state. Kaleb Klinkhammer, St. Michael's big righthander, is 4-0 and so is Rochester Redhawks pitcher Alec Sadowy. Brayden Simones leads Sartell with a 3-0 mark. Jack Seleski is 3-0 for Hastings. Joey

Nick leads the Duluth staff with a 4-0 mark. Hunter Bodina has a 5-0 record for Bemidji. Jackson Hinkle and Cade Bruett are both 3-0 for a deep Delano pitching staff and have led the Tigers to a 19-4 record.

While team competition is the focus of the State Tournament, there are two individual awards that will be presented on championship Sunday. The Most Valuable Player in the tournament receives the Fred Wannamaker Trophy, while the Most Outstanding Pitcher receives the Robert Wassenaar Award.

Only 2 teams return among last year's state qualifiers

By John Sherman

This year's field for the Minnesota American Legion Baseball Div. I Tournament in Rochester shows fans that the parity across the state has never been better.

Of the 16 teams in the State Tournament this week, only two of them were at state in Burnsville last summer.

St. Michael, the defending state champion, has earned its way back along with Sartell. In one of the pool-play games last season, St. Michael launched its march to the state championship by defeating Sartell 12-1.

Last year's state runner-up, Mankato National, has been replaced this year by its crosstown

rival, Mankato American.

Eden Prairie defeated last year's fourth-place finisher Edina in Sub-State 3 and returns to state after a one-year absence. Tri-City Red is back in state after defeating last season's state qualifier, Rosetown. Minneapolis Post Office is back in state this year after falling by the wayside against Minneapolis Southwest last season.

Some of the most consistent State Tournament qualifiers are not back in state this year even though they had good seasons. The Moorhead Blues were supplanted by Bemidji. Duluth is a qualifier at the expense of Grand Rapids.

Eden Prairie shortstop Joey Flom spoke for most of the American Legion players in the state earlier this season: "Every year, our goal

is the same. We want to go to state."

Flom's team comes to this week's competition with an overall record of 24-7. In the Sub-State 3 Tournament, the Eagles beat Edina twice, 13-3 and 1-0. The Eagles have a first-year head coach, Mike O'Brien, who came to Eden Prairie from a successful run in the Edina Baseball Association.

The toughest of the qualifying tournaments might have been Sub-State 11. Elk River, Maple Grove, Anoka and Osseo were all seeded ahead of No. 5 Wayzata, but the Wizards went undefeated in four games with two wins over Osseo and one win over Elk River and Anoka.

Two years ago, Joey Flom started in center field for Eden Prairie. This summer, he's back as the starting shortstop and team captain.