

# THE SPECTATOR

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## PITCHING: IS THERE EVER ENOUGH?

Good pitching will always stop good hitting  
and vice versa. - Casey Stengel

The NSL has many veteran pitchers, many that are well known around the league (Riewer, Janzen, Schumacher, DesMarais, Gregg, Heber, Streich and others). Each team also relies on at least one up and coming younger pitcher hoping they will develop into one of those veteran pitchers in time. How do you measure the best pitchers? Is it by the number of wins and losses, or by the lowest ERA, or is the lowest batting average against a pitcher the best measure? As a manager, do you prefer a veteran pitcher and his experience or do you prefer a young pitcher with a strong arm? Is the hard flame thrower the best choice or are the pitchers who have mastered the change of speed pitches tougher on hitters.

Inside, we look briefly at one young pitcher from each team in the NSL, many of whom are leading their team in pitching and many of whom are representing their team in the All Star game.



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"A pitcher needs two pitches, one they're looking for and one to cross them up."

## Saints beat Saints in 11 innings

*Smells*— the aroma of hot dogs and popcorn emanated from the concession stand. *Sounds*—the crack of the bat and the pop of ball hitting glove. *Sights*—the crescent moon shining above the right field scoreboard and the green grass of the outfield. The stage was set for a perfect night of baseball. So much so that when the Dassel Cokato Saints traveled to St. Michael to play the undefeated Saints, they got 11 innings of baseball, maybe not perfect baseball, but dramatic and exciting baseball just the same..

In a game filled with walks, double plays and errors, it was fitting that the game ended on error made attempting to turn a double play on runners that reached base by virtue of a walk. Kelly and Kyle Krzmarzik each walked to start the inning. After a force out at third on a sac bunt attempt, Aaron Cook hit a bouncer right back to the pitcher who intended to start a double play. Unfortunately for D-C, his throw sailed into CF and Kyle K. came around to score.

D-C opened the game with Dan Birkholz gaining first base on infield error. A sacrifice, strikeout and walk later, Matt Bergstrom looped a single into left field to score an unearned run off Adam McGrane. Although they threatened again in the third, fourth and sixth innings, Adam induced a double play to end each threat and McGrane finished up his 11 innings of work by retiring 16 of the last 18 hitters he faced.

Dan Birkholz pitched masterfully for 8 innings, escaping jams in almost every inning with the help of 3 double plays. In the ninth, D-C changed pitchers and St. Michael scored a run without a hit. Kyle K. and Nick Volkman both walked and advanced on a wild pitch. Aaron Cook was intentionally walked and Tyler Carlson followed with a slow roller to second. Brent Opsahl charged, fielded the ball, tagged Cook going to second and flipped to first for D-C's fourth DP of the night, but the tying run scored and forced overtime.

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**Adam McGrane**—At 6-0 and leading the league in strikeouts with an ERA of 0.78 and among the leaders in Innings pitched, Adam is not only the top young pitcher, but the top pitcher of any age, in the whole league. The 21 year old was a Jr. pitching for St. Cloud State this past spring.



**Eric Hanson**—Finding enough innings amongst a staff of veterans can be tough, but Eric has not given up an earned run in 2006 forcing the Saints to find room for his talent.



**Todd Roth**—With 30 strikeouts in 34 innings and only 4 walks allowed, Todd ranks as the best control and strikeout pitcher in the league and has picked up 2 wins without a loss this season.



**Adam Padrnos**—Another control pitcher with a good strikeout ratio, Adam has become a regular starter in 2006 going 2-1 with 23 strikeouts and 5 walks in 27 innings and a 2.93 ERA. The 23 year old pitched for Concordia Moorhead this spring.



**Tyler Decker**—Used in a relief role this year that has limited his innings, Tyler still is 2-0 and his 1.04 ERA would rank among the league leaders if he had more innings.



**Adam Koch**—In 2005, Adam blossomed into one of the top NSL pitchers and was drafted onto regional and state tourney teams. Pain in his shoulder has limited Adam's role this year to that of closer. Still his ERA for 2006 is a very low 1.50.



**Nate Hill**—A sophomore at St. Scholastica in Duluth, Nate has shown a strong arm, striking out 27 hitters in 27 innings. He's 1-2 with a 3.25 ERA and needs only to cut down on walks given up (18 in 27 innings).



**Alex Stein**—5-1 in 2005, Alex has kept the Polecats competitive in most games this year, defeating Loretto 3-2, losing 3-1 to the Orphans and leaving the game with Maple Lake trailing 3-2 in a game the Polecats came back to win. His 1-5 record reflects the rebuilding going on in Monticello. Alex only needs to improve on reducing walks allowed and lowering his pitch counts to become an elite pitcher in the NSL.

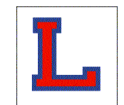


**Jesse Johnson**—A 20 year old who can locate his fastball and mix in a good curveball. Jesse started several games in 2005, but has settled into the top reliever roll for the Kings this year.

**"The older they get, the better they were when they were younger." - Jim Bouton,**



**CJ Goodwald**—The Diamond Devil southpaw is in his second year of NSL play. Graduating from Orono High in 2005, CJ went 4-0 last year and is 3-2 in 2006. For a young pitcher, Goodwald has mastered changing the speed of his pitches and keeps opposing hitters off balance. Goodwald threw a complete game, 5 hit shutout when he faced Maple Lake.



**Nick Koch**—Only two pitchers worked more than 60 innings last year, both were from the Larks. Nick worked 61 - 2/3 innings to lead the league in 2005. Leading the league again in 2006 with 59 innings pitched already, Nick has become the ace of the Loretto staff. At 24, Nick does not strike out a lot of hitters, but has learned the art of making opposing batters hit the ball for outs. So far he is 3-4 with a 3.36 ERA and only 9 walks in 59 innings.



**Mike Mitchell**—Lightly used in 2005 and still one of the youngest pitchers on a young staff, Mike earned a victory over Monticello allowing only 1 run as the Mallards won 5-1. He held Delano to 3 runs in a game that Mound eventually won 4-3 in extra innings. Mike is 1-2 with 23 strikeouts in 33 innings.



**Jason Lesser**—A 22 year old right hander who has pitched over half of the River Bandit's innings this year and third most in the league, Jason is 2-5 with a 3.18 ERA. His highlight victory was a 3 hitter against Kingston. Many of his losses have been by one or two runs. In his third year with the Town team after pitching for Rockford High school, Jason keeps improving and consequently pitches more innings.



**Josh Juntunen**—The Villains top young pitcher owns the top ratio for strikeouts per inning with 35 K's in 32 innings. His 2.79 ERA is among league leaders and although his won-loss record is only 1-3, he has beaten Kingston while losing games by scores of 2-1 to both Hutch and Buffalo and Josh left the St. Michael game tied 6-6 in a game the Villains eventually lost 8-7.

**"I am throwing twice as hard as I ever did. It's just not getting there as fast." - Lefty Gomez, on aging**

# NSL ROSTERS

# ALL-STAR GAME

SOUTH				NORTH			
<u>Dassel-Cokato</u>		<u>Maple Plain</u>		<u>Albertville</u>		<u>Loretto</u>	
Dan Birkholz	OF	CJ Goodwald	P	Dan Brant	IF/OF	Kent Koch	SS
Eric Hanson	P	KC Johnson	3B	Josh Juntunen	P	Nick Koch	P
Brent Opsahl	IF	Brandon Schliinz	2B	Todd Klaers	1B	Brandon Scanlon	OF
<u>Delano</u>		<u>Mound</u>		<u>Buffalo</u>		<u>Maple Lake</u>	
Derek Falde	OF	Grant Barthel	3B	Nate Hill	IF	John Anderson	P
Kevin Jaunich	OF	Mike Mitchell	P	Corey Braun	P/SS	Darin Decker	OF
Todd Roth	P	Peter Sycks	C	Tyler Antony	C	Tyler Decker	OF/IF
<u>Howard Lake</u>		<u>Rockford</u>		<u>Kingston</u>		<u>Monticello</u>	
Aaron DesMarais	P	Cole Hansen	OF	Billy Aho	OF	Matt Loegering	OF/P
Luke Gagnon	IF	Jason Lesser	P	Craig Miller	C	Alex Stein	P
Tim Sonnek	2B	Ryan Rassatt	1B	Chris Picken	P	<u>St. Michael</u>	
<u>Hutchinson</u>						Mike Freske	1B
Luke Klitzke	1B					Adam McGrane	P
Adam Padrnos	P					Chris Volkman	OF
Tim Thode	3B					Nick Volkman	3B

*A knuckleball is a curve ball that doesn't give a damn. Jimmy Cannon*

## From the BLEACHERS ...

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The game featured a couple of unusual plays.

Birkholz caught a runner leaning at first and had him picked off by 2 steps, yet somehow he avoided the tag and got back safely to the base..

In the eighth, with two out, Bobby Kneefe on third, and two strikes against the batter, St Michael's hitter took a half swing at a pitch that bounced past Matt Bergstrom. Kneefe came charging home. The ball, Kneefe and pitcher Birkholz all arrived at home at the same time. The ball caromed off the sliding runner, bouncing back to Bergstrom. The batter, unaware of whether the pitch had been called a ball or if his half swing was strike three stood waiting near home plate. Matt alertly threw the ball to first base where the St. Michael hitter was called out.

Two defensive web gems of the game -

St. Michael's Kelly Kazmarzik at first base snagged a scorching one hopper with a dive toward the first base line in the second inning.

Shane Larson for D-C made a back to the infield, over the shoulder catch in centerfield, reminiscent of Willie Mays.



## A look at the Division Races ...

**EAST**— Mound has surpassed their 2005 win total and a three game winning streak has helped them narrow the gap between them and the Diamond Devils to two games. The Mallards need to win the rematch on June 12 in Mound. Loretto is a couple of games behind Mound with Rockford and Albertville needing a little streak or their meeting on July 16 could be to determine the fourth and fifth seed.

**CENTRAL**— The Saints of St. Michael lost their first game of the season to Howard Lake in extra innings, a night after beating D-C in 11 innings. D-C will have to win the rematch on at the Pork Chop feed Saturday July 8 at 7:00. Hutch caught Delano for a third place tie at 7-6 by winning games over Rockford, Maple Plain and Monticello. The Lakers' current three game losing streak has dropped them into last place.

**WEST**— The Orphans have stopped losing the close ones and knocked St. Michael from the unbeaten ranks to take the lead in the West. The Bulldogs edged Loretto and Maple Lake, but dropped two games this week to drop 1-1/2 games behind. The Kings' victories over Monticello, Maple Lake and Maple Plain have brought them to one game behind Buffalo. The Polecats are now a game and a half behind the Kings with three games left to play.



## 2006 STANDINGS (THRU 7/6/06)

<b>EAST</b>			
	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>G.B.</i>
MAPLE PLAIN	9	4	...
MOUND	7	6	2
LORETTO	5	7	3.5
ROCKFORD	3	10	6
ALBERTVILLE	3	11	6.5

<b>CENTRAL</b>			
	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>G.B.</i>
ST. MICHAEL	12	1	...
DASSEL-COKATO	10	4	2.5
DELANO	7	6	5
HUTCHINSON	7	6	5
MAPLE LAKE	4	8	7.5

<b>WEST</b>			
	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>G.B.</i>
HOWARD LAKE	8	4	--
BUFFALO	6	7	2.5
KINGSTON	5	7	3
MONTICELLO	4	9	4.5

"Baseball statistics are like a girl in a bikini. They show a lot, but not everything." Toby Harrah

## 2006 STATS (THRU 7/5/06)

<b>EAST</b>				
<i>Player</i>	<i>AB</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>Ave</i>
B Mazer MP	33	11	16	485
A Snyder Md	51	14	21	412
D Brant Alb	44	5	16	364
M Dausg Roc	39	10	14	359
KC Johnson MP	51	13	18	353
G Barthel Md	51	5	18	353
R Pawelk Lor	32	8	11	344
A Gregg MP	47	7	16	340
P Sycks Md	56	7	19	339
Br Scanlon Lor	51	14	17	333
R Rassatt Roc	43	3	14	326
T Traen Lor	37	7	12	324
T Klaers Alb	51	7	16	314
R Schaust Lor	35	4	11	314

<b>2B Leader</b>	<b>HR Leader</b>
P Sycks 6	KC Johnson 2
B Mazer 6	<b>RBI Leader</b>
D Brant 6	P Sycks 12
T Klaers 6	<b>3B Leaders</b>
	P Harrell 1

<i>Pitching Leaders</i>	<i>IP</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>K</i>	<i>ERA</i>
A Gregg MP	27	3	-1	19	1.33
L Ludvigson Md	26	3	-0	21	2.42
Jo Juntunen Alb	32	1	-3	35	2.79
J Lesser Roc	56	2	-5	26	3.18
N Koch Lor	59	3	-4	17	3.36

<b>CENTRAL</b>				
<i>Player</i>	<i>AB</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>Ave</i>
M Freske StM	60	8	25	417
D Falde Del	49	11	20	408
D Birkholz DC	55	15	22	400
L Klitzke Hut	42	5	16	381
M Bergstrom DC	52	8	19	365
N Volkman StM	44	9	16	364
D Decker ML	37	6	13	351
K Jaunich Del	46	12	16	349
J Schwarze Hut	46	10	16	348
T Thode Hut	50	5	17	340
J Wilson Del	45	8	15	333
C Volkman StM	48	17	16	333
T Decker ML	48	8	16	333
B Kneefe StM	52	15	17	327
T Carlson StM	60	16	19	317
K Jerpseth ML	48	8	15	313
M Peterson Del	52	7	16	308

<b>HR Leader</b>	<b>2B Leader</b>
B Opsahl 2	T Thode Hut 11
C Fobbe ML 2	<b>3B Leaders</b>
B Kneefe StM 2	J Schwarze 1
C Volkman StM 2	<b>RBI Leader</b>
	M Freske StM 18

<i>Pitching Leaders</i>	<i>IP</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>K</i>	<i>ERA</i>
A McGrane StM	57	6	-0	57	0.78
J Janzen Del	49	3	-4	36	2.56
C Rycks Hut	35	3	-1	33	2.57
D Birkholz DC	36	2	-0	24	3.50
C Raiche ML	32	1	-4	15	5.23

<b>WEST</b>				
<i>Player</i>	<i>AB</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>Ave</i>
N Hill Buf	30	7	13	433
B Aho Kin	38	6	16	421
A DesMarais HL	39	7	16	410
L Gagnon HL	22	10	9	409
A Koch HL	25	6	9	360
T Sonnek HL	39	9	13	333
K Holker Mon	31	6	10	323
B Veches Mon	28	6	9	321
A Gagnon HL	48	10	15	313
J Stueven HL	48	11	15	313
R Bethke Buf	33	6	10	303
Mt Loegering Mon	40	5	12	300

<b>2B Leader</b>	<b>3B Leaders</b>
R Bethke 3	B Borrell HL 1
<b>HR Leader</b>	Erlandson Mon 1
J Stueven HL 1	A Stein Mon 1
C Burau HL 1	<b>RBI Leader</b>
	J Stueven HL 3

<i>Pitching Leaders</i>	<i>IP</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>K</i>	<i>ERA</i>
E Cox Buf	24	3	-0	19	2.63
S Heber HL	28	2	-1	20	2.89
C Picken Kin	37	3	-3	19	3.89
A Stein Mon	31	1	-5	21	5.23