

# The 2018 Spectator

2018 Preview Issue



## Manager's Predicted Finish

### Predictions

For 2018 the North Star League managers seem to think four teams are likely title contenders. They are [Hutchinson](#), [Buffalo](#), [Maple Lake](#) and [Howard Lake](#). The next three teams are picked to also make the top seven and receive a bye into the Regionals.

Those three teams are [Delano](#), [Loretto](#) and [Dassel-Cokato](#). That leaves four teams that are predicted to be the bottom four in the standings. Those are [Litchfield](#), [Cokato](#), [Maple Plain](#) and [Waverly](#).

After winning the title in 2017, [Hutchinson](#) returns as the favorite to repeat in the Manager's poll. Their offensive line-up returns mostly intact and the pitching staff is deep and experienced so it would be no surprise if they do repeat. [Buffalo](#) finished strong last year and with a young core that now is experienced in the playoffs and state tournament, they should be a strong contender. [Maple Lake](#) is chosen third. The Lakers recent history shows they can win a lot of games by scoring a lot of runs and their pitching staff is gaining experience to make them competitive in tight games too. [Howard Lake](#) is picked fourth and as usual will rely on pitching and defense to win enough games to contend for the top spot.

The three teams voted to finish in the middle have a history of being near the top at times and usually making the regions. [Delano](#) was the choice for fifth place, The A's have young core of players and return all of their pitchers. [Loretto](#) returns a strong offensive line up and figures to score a lot of runs. Their success depends on the depth and health of their pitching staff. [D-C](#) lost a lot of pitchers before last year and still were very competitive. They expect to improve with more experienced pitchers teaming up with veterans Flick and Zweibhomer. Still the managers placed them in the seventh and final spot to make the regions with going through the league playoffs.

## 2017 Final Standings

	W	L	Pct	GB
<a href="#">Hutchinson</a>	19	3	.863	...
<a href="#">Maple Lake</a>	15	7	.682	4
<a href="#">D-C</a>	14	8	.636	5
<a href="#">Buffalo</a>	14	8	.636	5
<a href="#">Howard Lake</a>	14	8	.636	5
<a href="#">Delano</a>	13	9	.591	6
<a href="#">Loretto</a>	12	10	.545	7
<a href="#">Maple Plain</a>	9	13	.409	10
<a href="#">Litchfield</a>	8	14	.364	11
<a href="#">Cokato</a>	7	15	.318	12
<a href="#">Waverly</a>	2	20	.091	17

The four teams that are picked to be in the league playoffs are the same teams that were in those spots last year, playing well in stretches and struggling to win on others. [Cokato](#) was inconsistent last year and needs to find more depth and reliability in their pitching. [Maple Plain](#) broke in a group of young players last year and will need improvement from that group in order to move up in the standings. [Montrose/Waverly](#) is still chosen to finish last, probably based on their history of finishing there. They pin their hopes on avoiding the cellar on some young pitchers that showed promise at the end of last year as the Stingers ran off a few wins and found out they kind of like it.



## The NORTH STAR LEAGUE

Just take the ball and throw it where you want to.  
Throw Strikes. Home plate don't move.



**Buffalo 14- 8** The Bulldogs' late run last year and participation in the state tournament should make the hungry for a return trip. The core of Jon Eurlle, Colton Haight, JD O'Donnell, Carter Vogt, Brett Renshaw, Jason Senger and Jake Duske are back and they expect plenty of help from Eric Newman, John Weber, Ramon Vega Jr. and Luke Merz. New this year are Tony McCombs and Christian Johnson.. The Bulldogs are strong throughout the order, and have many pitching options. Their goal is to develop a stronger defense, but there is no reason that Buffalo shouldn't be in the mix for the top spots in the standings.

**Cokato 7-15** The Kernels will rely on a large group of returning players, isaac and Luke Nelson, Ethan and Loan Niemala, Tom Halonen, Dalton Asplin, Jason Ross, Billy Aho and Steve Schmitt to make them competitive. Also expected to add to the effort is Seth Looft with a year of college under his belt and the return of Vinnie Pokornowski and Adam Barnaal. Cokato may not a have a strong armed pitcher, but they do have a number of quality pitchers that can keep them in games, so if the lineup can score more runs, especially against other teams better pitchers, then the Kernels could surprise a few teams in their drive to move out of that bottom four.

**D-C 14-8** With the retirement of Mark Forsman as manager, the Saints may be different in 2018. Still the Saints expected 2017 to be a rebuilding year, yet they remained near the top of the standings so this change in leadership may not change them much at all. Jordan Flick, Tyler Zweibhomer and Mike Leffler return to anchor the staff and returning in the line up are John Hohenstein, Brendon Opsahl, Andy Haataja, Bryce Berggren and Mitch Kurtzweig. Trent Thinesen, Carson Lindell, Tyler Brandel, Holton Miller, Ben Lindquist, Cy Flick, Gus Flick, James Howell and Michael Howell round out the main contributors for D-C. The outlook for 2018 is much more of the same – continuing to compete for the top spots and expecting to be up high in the standings.

**Delano 13-9** The A's roster is comprised of a good mix of veterans with a solid core of young players with lots of potential. Back for another year are Hunter Hart, Nate Norman, James Otto, Adam Schleper, Jake Gleason, Matt Arens, Brady Miller, Jeff Althoff and Jack Paulson. Players that could be instrumental in Delano's success are Austin Schneider, Jordan Schramel and Jeremy Maschino and added to the roster this year is Nick Main. Delano plays good defense and has plenty of speed. If their group of young players grow into their roles and the pitchers throw strikes, The A's will be competitive and likely be in one of the top spots in the standings.

Baseball is like a poker game.  
Nobody wants to quit when he's losing;  
nobody wants you to quit when you're ahead.



## The NORTH STAR LEAGUE

*Yesterday's Homeruns  
don't win today's games.*

Playing baseball is not real life.  
It's a fantasy world. It's a dream come true



**Howard Lake 14-8** The Orphans always seem to have top flight pitching backed up by a strong, solid defense. Their formula has worked for years and is expected to do the same in 2018. Mike Dockendorf, Jared Koch and Ben Borell are back to pitch for the Orphans. Also returning are Steve Boger, Brett Ahsenmacher, Tom Borell, Mitch Bauman, Matt Streich, Sam & Max Kittock, Zach Kuefler, Brad Bickmann, Tyler Hannan and Cory Dehn. Added to the roster are Alex Bauman, Noah Bush and Tony Borrell. The Orphans expect some of those players to receive a chance to play more as they try to gain experience and roster depth in their drive back to the top of the standings.

**Hutchinson 19-3** Why wouldn't the Huskies repeat as champions in 2018? The only reason might be that the other teams in the league also appear to be strong, but there appears to be no reason to expect Hutchinson to slip back either. Matt Piechowski, Jayden Jurgenson, Jake Wendland, Matt Timms, Connor Kern, Marcus Hahn, Jayden Fleck and Keegan Macemon all return and Cody Arlt, Jeremiah Van De Steeg, Noah Corrow, Dylan Reid and Caleb Marquardt could also be important parts of the team. This year they have added Brad Henning, Evan Kohl, Jacob Kraft and Kevin Kuhl. The Huskies expect their offense to produce lots of runs and their starting pitching to be competitive. They hope to improve their bullpen and receive more consistency from their young players, then there should be no reason they don't repeat.

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**Litchfield 8-14** The Blues had some good streaks in their first year in the North Star League. For 2018, they bring back key contributors Josh Johnson, Toby Chellin, Brady Smith, Carson Deal, Jake Jones, Kal Volinkaty and Austin Larson. Litchfield's strength is the middle of their line up and their outfield. Their goal is to establish a strong consistent pitching rotation as the season goes along. The Blues have added four new players, Gabe Lecher, Luke Schultz, Sam Tibbets and John Kiehn. Five players they think can help out more this year are Charles Hamm, Andrew Loch, Lucas Johnson, Stan Ridgeway and Dylan Kotzer. Like all four teams that had to play in the league playoffs, the Blues goal is to rise high enough in the standings to earn a bye into the regions.

**Loretto 12-10** The Larks veterans have a long history of being in the top half the standings and return all of them. Tyler Maher, Kent Koch, Ryan Schaust, Nathan Maher, Eric Schutte and Drew VanDehey represent a powerful line up. Pitchers George Faue and Colton Petron can be top of the line pitchers. Hunter Petron, Will Reschenberg, Tyler Gearin, Andrew Rossini and Tommy Wehman are needed to round out the line up and add depth to the veteran core. Keenan Hodgkin and Tommy Deters are new additions to the roster. Loretto's line up and top pitchers should make them contenders if they stay healthy and get solid performances from young players who hopefully will step up and add depth to the veteran core.



If it wasn't for baseball,  
I'd be in either the penitentiary or  
the cemetery.



**The funny thing about these uniforms is that you hang them in the closet and they get smaller and smaller. — Curt Flood**

**Maple Lake 15-7** The Lakers return everyone and expect that to translate to a successful season. Returning are Matt Bergstrom, Mitch Wurm, Riley Decker, Luke Fobbe, Graham Brown, Donnie Mavencamp, Brian Redemske and Derek Rachel. In addition, Brock Fobbe, McRae Haney and Hnter Malachek add to the mix as the Lakers look for their defense, team speed and depth to help them compete with the other top North Star league teams.

**Maple Plain 9-13** The Diamond Devils had injuries last year to Calvin Rippberer, Colton Peters and Parker Schlueter and need them back and need to stay healthy as they develop a young group of players. Danny Fafinski, Tommy Traen, Logan Kinsel, Jake Hartman and Andy Johnson all had their fully will still have Adam and Lee Greggmoments last year and if they contribute more, Maple Plain could move up. They will still rely on veterans KC Johnson, Ryan Dwyer, Judson McKown and Billy Soule to anchor their line up and pitching. Maple Plain will need their younger players to come through in tight games to be successful.

**Montrose/Waverly 2-20** The Stingers look to continue last season's late season success and win a few more games this year. They return Kirby Moynagh, Brady Boddeker, Jordan Steffer, Ben Kunze, Marcus Wittmer and Jadrien Keavy all of whom made great contributions and improved as the season progressed. The Stingers have not been a good defensive team, need more speed and depth but are looking like they will be much improved. If they get more help from Andrew Moynagh and Brad Farnick as well as some depth from newcomers Bill Aamodt, Nick Zellmer, Mile Korte, Christian Donovan, Alex Smothers and Todd Haag.



**EVERY STRIKE BRINGS ME CLOSER TO A HOMERUN**

**Mound** - The Mallards have decide they cannot field a team in 201.

The result is every team in the North Star League will play a home and away series with the other 10 teams for a 20 game regular season schedule. The top seven teams in the league standings will receive a bye into the regions. The bottom four teams will play a league play off with the winner becoming the eighth seed at the Region 12 tournament.

The other sports are just sports.

**Baseball is a love.**

