

# Spectator

Starry Night in Dassel edition

54th Year

## North Star Standings

### West

	W	L	GB
Howard Lake	7	4	--
Monticello	7	4	--
Buffalo	5	4	1
Kingston	0	12	7.5

### Central

	W	L	GB
Dassel-Cokato	9	1	--
Maple Lake	8	5	2.5
Delano	8	5	2.5
St. Michael	6	4	3
Hutchinson	4	6	5

### East

	W	L	GB
Maple Plain	8	3	--
Mound	7	5	1.5
Loretto	4	5	3
Albertville	4	10	5.5
Rockford	1	10	7

### A's ace earning straight A's

## Delano's Janzen is dialed in

The answer to the trivia question will always be Jeff Olson (Q: What Athletics hitter *finally* broke the team's two-year homerless streak, on June 16 against Buffalo?), but Delano's answer for everything else this year has been Jeff Janzen.

In a season of youthful infusions for the team, Delano's 14-year veteran pitcher is throwing like never before. Janzen just keeps lining up brilliant start after brilliant start, and as a result, the A's are off to their most brilliant start in half a decade.

The numbers speak for themselves: five wins already, with an ERA of 0.83. In other words, he's given up just five earned runs in 54 innings. Three of those runs came in the 8th inning of a heartbreaking 3-2 loss at Dassel-Cokato, just when it looked like Delano was ready to send the division leaders to the canvas.

"Really, I have to credit our defense,"

Janzen said. "I just have so much more confidence in the guys behind me that all I have to do is go out and worry about throwing strikes. It makes it so much easier for me than it's been the past few years."

The pitcher gives major props to Tony Griebel and Kevin Jaunich for shoring up the infield defense, and also to his young catcher, Joe Lucht, who's just one year removed from Delano High School.

"[Lucht] played a lot during the last half of the season, and it took some time for us to get used to each other," Janzen admitted. "I was shaking off signs all the time. Now we're just totally on the same page, which just makes the game go a lot faster, and it's a lot of fun."

Still, after almost a decade and a half of amateur baseball, a guy doesn't just go out and lower his ERA by several points

**Janzen, cont. on p. 2**

## Mound's hanging around

2003 was like the movie *Groundhog Day* for the Mound Mallards. Everytime the alarm clock went off, they'd lose by a run in the ninth.

Well, apparently the Mallards chucked that damn alarm clock into Lake Minnetonka. Mound has strung together enough solid victories this season to find itself in the middle of the Eastern division race. Wednesday night's 11-4 pummeling of division rival Loretto was just the latest sign that this team has no intention of disappearing down the stretch.

"We're feeling pretty good," said Mound manager Andy Snyder. "We have better

team chemistry, too. You know how it is: once you start winning, you get more confident."

At seven wins, the Mallards already have two more victories than their entire gut-wrenching 2003 campaign. More quality wins, too. In addition to Loretto, Mound has beaten Howard Lake and recorded a nice weekend St. Michael-Albertville sweep. For further proof that this is a new season, the Mallards even stole a one-run game from Kingston.

"Yeah, I felt bad for Seth," Snyder admitted, referring to Kingston manager

**Mound, cont. on p. 2**

## around the horn

### **NSL web discussion board**

Bringing baseball chatter to a whole new level, D-C Saints LF/computer geek Brent Pokornowski has created a North Star League discussion board on the web. Fans and players alike can access this board at <http://pub.alxnet.com/forum?id=1118911> (also linked from the NSL website). You'll already find a few entertaining postings there. Have a question about something? Have an answer for everything? Don't be shy—jump into the chat!

### **16 innings equals...bupkis?**

Maple Plain and Hutchinson played a baseball game on June 15 and a marathon broke out. The only problem is, nobody won the marathon. The teams

## **To pitch better, hit the books?**

**Janzen, cont. from p. 1**

because of a catcher and a couple infielders. Janzen admits that he's throwing the ball harder than he's thrown in four or five years, though it probably doesn't have much to do with his rigid offseason regimen. "I was studying for my brokerage license all winter," he says, "so I wasn't exactly working out a ton."

Thanks to two promising young starters in Aaron Swenson and Matt Griebel, Janzen doesn't have to worry about carrying the Delano pitching staff mostly on his own. That should keep him plenty fresh for the playoffs.

And it's about time. Oakland shouldn't be the only Athletics team with a "Big Three" pitching rotation. Still, Jeff Janzen is the Big Unit in Delano—while his ERA remains in the little digits.

played to a 4-4 tie, and the game was called after 16 innings.

The bummer of it is that the teams can't just continue the game until someone scores; they'll have to replay the whole thing in its entirety. Statistically speaking, it's as though the meeting never happened. Call it the anti-rainout.

That's too bad, because a couple of performances would have reflected nicely in the record books. Take the late-game pitchers, for example. Hutch's Kyle Messner came in in the 8th and pitched six scoreless innings, striking out seven. Maple Plain's Adam Gregg threw the last six innings for the Diamond Devils, giving up just one hit and striking out seven.

The other bummer? That everyone had to go to work the next day.

### **Call it a tri-cycle**

Maple Plain's Brandon Schliinz had a pretty stellar game on June 23 in a 10-5 win over Albertville. Schliinz went 3-for-4 with three runs and 4 RBIs. His hits included one double, one triple, and one home run. That makes his the rarest of all missed cycles: the one that comes up short by a single.

## **Three perfect strikes at the plate**

**Mound, cont. from p. 1**

Isaacson. "They deserved to win that game."

Mound did revert to last year's form on June 13, in a one-run loss to division-leading Maple Plain. The Mallards scored a run in the top of the ninth to tie the game, but that came after they'd already had two runners thrown out at home earlier. As if that weren't enough, a third runner was thrown out at home in the 10th. The Diamond Devils went on to score the winner in 11.

Snyder points to two hitters at the top of the order who've been key to the

### **They needed each other**

Saying Kingston and Rockford are having slightly disappointing seasons is like saying Jesse Ventura kinda likes his fireworks on the Fourth.

Both teams came into this year with reasons for optimism, if not designs on a division pennant just yet. But Kingston and Rockford are having a positively tough go of it, particularly in the run-scoring category. The Kings and River Bandits have each found themselves on the short end of a shutout four times.

That's what made their one head-to-head this year so much fun. Kingston, sparked by Brian Dietz's HR and 4 RBI, had 11 hits and 12 runs. The visiting River Bandits had an offensive joyride of their own, riding Scott Mauricio and Ben Fontana's 4 RBIs apiece to 15 hits and 15 runs. Rockford took the win, but both teams got to explode for a day.

### **Box score line of the week**

Buffalo's Randy Bethke did it all against Kingston on June 13. On offense, he led the team with 3 hits, including 2 2B and 2 RBIs. On the hill, he had a complete-game shutout—4 hits, 5 strikeouts, 0 walks.

team's turnaround. Peter Harrell is batting in the .400s so far, and Peter Sykes has brought his average up roughly .250 since last year. Both play baseball at Bethel, so they came in well-seasoned. New shortstop Mike Mitchell also provided a spark, but the rest of his season has gone the way of shoulder surgery.

Snyder marveled at how this team is basically the same crew that lost so many games last year ("even without [Josh] Jacobson, though Kyle Krotzer's done a good job in his place"). Then again, this same crew wasn't *that* far from a bunch more wins.