

The Enderlin Dynasty (1987-1994)

The small Ransom County town of Enderlin had the top amateur team in the state during the mid-1950s, winning state titles in 1952, 1953, and again in 1955. A generation later, the town put together another string of championships that dominated their division like no team until the Jamestown Elks owned the Class AA division over the next decade. Until 1990, North Dakota's amateur baseball association divided teams into two classes, A for the smaller towns and AA for the larger. Each held a separate state tournament, and the respective champions would play for the overall title. During the four years 1987 to 1990, Enderlin won three of four Class A titles, losing only to Tolna in 1989. When the association switched to three classes in 1991, Enderlin won three of the next four Class AA championships. The only one they didn't win (1993) was when the NDABI bumped them up to the top, AAA, division for the tournament.

Ever since Harvey, the Class A champ, downed the Class AA Jamestown Elks 5-1 in the 1980 overall title game, the scores of the next six overall championship games were 17-4, 11-2, 14-7, 17-3, 11-2, and 22-1, all in favor of the Class AA champion. Often, because the Class A teams played more games than the A teams, they simply ran out of pitching by the time of the overall title game. The NDABI decided the overall games were becoming too one-sided so decided to eliminate them. Beginning in 1987 each class would crown their own champion and name an MVP. However, if the game had been held that year, and Scott Radloff played, there was a good chance the Class A winner (Enderlin) would have broken the streak and beat the Class AA champs.

Radloff first caught the eye of professional scouts at a Cincinnati Reds tryout camp in Mandan.¹ Don Hanson, who coached at Mandan High School and was an associate scout for the Reds, organized the camp, and usually Bill Clark, the Reds Midwest area scout, also was on hand. This resulted in a number of North Dakota players being drafted by the Reds including John Ellefson (Williston), Al Kunick (Bismarck), Dave Froelich (Mandan), and Gregg Lorenz (Harvey). The camp, open to anyone at least sixteen years old who had obtained permission from their high school or Legion coach, sometimes drew as many as sixty or seventy hopefuls. Hanson explained that the Reds were looking for athletic ability, particularly arm strength and foot speed, with the thought that their minor league coaches and instructors could teach other baseball specific skills. That's why one summer invitations were extended to a track sprinter from Robinson and a javelin thrower from Reeder, neither of whom had ever played baseball.

A native of Chafee, North Dakota, Radloff first played in the state amateur tournament in 1977 as a pickup by Absaraka. He played legion ball for Casselton and enrolled at Valley City State University where he made the District 12 All-NAIA team as a first baseman/pitcher while also punting and playing safety for the Vikings football team. He was drafted by the Reds in the 23rd round of the 1982 amateur draft and was assigned to their Rookie League team in Billings, Montana. He was later transferred to a Class A affiliate in Eugene, Oregon where he hit .335 and

¹ *Bismarck Tribune*, June 22, 1985

was named the team's most valuable player. Radloff played one more season (1983) in the Red's minor league system but although he batted .454 during spring training in Tampa, Florida, he was released that spring

Despite his success in professional baseball, his release was likely due to his age (25) and the fact the Reds were looking for more power (Radloff was a left-handed line drive, high-average hitter) from the first base position. During his time on professional baseball, he had the opportunity to play with future Red major leaguers such as Eric Davis, Kal Daniels, Danny Tartabull, Tom Browning, and Nick Esasky. Radloff held no bitterness about his release saying he, "signed for peanuts", and was just happy to have the chance to pursue his boyhood dream.²

Radloff played in just two games for Enderlin in the 1987 tournament, the semi-final and the championship, but he dominated those two games like few players in the history of the amateur tournament. He went three for three with two homeruns and five RBIs in an 8-2 win over Lansford in the semis. Radloff threw a complete game win in the title game, outpitching Rolla's Greg Larson, and smacked two more homers in the 8-7 win. In the two games Radloff didn't make an out, getting five hits (four of them homers) and drawing six walks, two of them intentional.

After gaining statewide notoriety as an outstanding all-around athlete at Jamestown High School, Doug Hogan enrolled at Mineral Area Junior College in Flat River, Missouri where he pitched on the baseball team. He was signed by the Los Angeles Dodgers organization and spent two years in their minor league system in Lethbridge Alberta, Vancouver, British Columbia, and finally in Clinton Iowa, including an invitation to the Dodgers spring training camp in Vero Beach, Florida in 1978. While in Clinton he had a bit part in the movie "One In A Million: The Ron LeFlore Story"³. In one scene he threw a few pitches to actor LaVar Burton who played LeFlore in the movie and was paid \$35 for his efforts.⁴

While in professional baseball, Hogan's fastball was clocked at 96 miles per hour, and he developed an effective slider as a secondary pitch. Used exclusively as a relief pitcher then, he threw consistently in the low nineties. Now in his thirties, Hogan had lost a few miles of speed, probably down to the mid-80s so when NDSU Sportland showed they could hit his fastball early in the Class A title game, he switched to his curveball and reeled off five consecutive scoreless innings. Meanwhile, his teammates were rapping out seventeen hits, including four by Hogan and three by Bob Piatz (who also homered) in a 10-4 win for the Class AA championship.

² *Jamestown Sun*, August 18, 1989

³ LeFlore was serving time at Jackson State Prison in Michigan for armed robbery. He played on the prison baseball team where Detroit Tiger manager Billy Martin heard about his athletic ability and potential. He was offered a tryout and upon his release was signed by the Tigers. He had a successful nine-year major league career, making the all-star team and leading the American League in stolen bases twice.

⁴ *Jamestown Sun*, July 21, 1991

When the NDABI met during the tournament, one of the agenda items was to set the date for the following year's tournament. It usually began on a Friday and ended two Sundays later meaning it spanned two consecutive weekends. There was never an ideal time to hold the event. They wanted to avoid a conflict with the state American Legion tournament because so many players crossed over, playing on both the town's legion and amateur teams. They also wanted to avoid the peak of harvest. There were several occasions where teams paid their entry fee for the tournament but had to forfeit their game because so many players were busy combining that they couldn't find nine men to come to Jamestown. Finally, they also had to finish before the start of high school football practice because several players were involved in coaching.

The Enderlin Indies entered the 1988 state tournament looking to repeat as Class A champions, but they would face competition from two other hopefuls. The Jamestown Merchants dropped down to the Class A level this year and won their first two games downing Fargo Hope Lutheran 16-3 and Belcourt 3-1. Langdon made a deep run with great pitching (two runs allowed in three games) in wins over Minto, Ellendale, and Velva to reach the title game. The powerful Indies made short work of Hatton-Thompson in a 10-1 rout, hit six homers to eliminate the Merchants 15-4, and beat Carrington in the semi-finals.

In the Class A championship game Enderlin banged out sixteen hits and defeated Langdon 14-3. Scott Radloff still batted third in the Enderlin lineup but this year the best overall Indie player was leadoff man Tyler Schlect. He reached first base during one tournament game and the speedy shortstop drew twelve consecutive throws from the opposing pitcher in an attempt to keep him close to the bag and prevent him from stealing second. Schlect, who was named Class A MVP, went six for sixteen in the tournament with eight runs scored and also excelled on defense, making several great plays and committing no errors, a feat he modestly claimed was due to the well-manicured infield at McElroy Park as compared to Hendrickson Field in his hometown of Enderlin.

The Elks, who had been managed by R.D. Brown for the past eleven years, had record of 33-7 in tournament play over that span, and reached the championship game nine of those eleven years. This year Big Jim's Café in Jamestown offered a \$5 gift certificate and a one-liter bottle of Pepsi to any player who hit a homerun in the tournament, and several of the Elks players cashed in. Rob Keller hit a first inning grand slam in the Elks opening round win over Grand Forks and more baseballs left the park in their next two wins. In the Class AA title game against the Devils Lake Eagles, Piatz and Scott Nustad homered, and Jim Roaldson hit a three-run shot in a five-run first inning as the Elks cruised to an 11-4 win, their fourth title of the 1980s (also winning in 1883, 1985, and 1987). In the four games of the 1988 tourney, the Elks outscored their opponents 47-18, with MVP Doug Hogan leading the way with seven hits in fifteen at bats and two pitching wins.

Two weeks before the 1989 Class AA tournament, the Jamestown Elks swept a doubleheader from the Wahpeton-Breckenridge Twins by scores of 18-6 and 31-3. The two teams met in the first round of the state tournament and the Twins, who came in with a record of 4-25, pulled one of the biggest upsets in recent memory when they beat the Elks 10-7. No one could blame the Elks' Bob Piatz for the loss. He reached base safely in his last thirty plate appearances during of the season, walking nine times and collecting twenty-one hits. His manager, R. D. Brown remarked, "I've never seen that happen at any level of baseball"⁵

The most exciting game in the early rounds in Class AA was a matchup between Devils Lake and Minot. Mark Anderson hit two homeruns to stake Minot to an early lead, but Devils Lake tied the game at three-all when Jay Frydenlund hit a two-run homer in the ninth. The Lakers eventually won it 4-3 on a hit by pitch in the fifteenth inning. Minot pitcher Steve Milisits struck out twenty-two batters in 12 1/3 innings.

The F-M Chix beat Wahpeton-Breckenridge 7-6 in the quarter finals and eliminated Devils Lake in the semis 8-3 when Jason McClellan and Jeff Kraft homered in a five-run fifth inning. NDSU Sportland beat the two Grand Forks entries, the Air Base and Gerrells, to reach the championship game. In the final, Chix second baseman Brand Schwab knocked in three runs in a 7-3 win over Sportland, the Chix twentieth win in their last twenty-one games,

Two-time defending champ Enderlin and Tolna worked their way through the Class A brackets. Tolna beat Ellendale in their opener, got a forfeit win over Langdon when their opponents couldn't field a team due to harvest commitments, and beat Rolette in the semis. Scott Radloff shutout Bottineau 8-0 in Enderlin's opener and homered and knocked in five runs in their 10-1 win over Carrington in the other semifinal game. In the championship, Cory Anderson struck out fourteen and allowed the powerful Enderlin hitters just five hits, and Curt Herman hit an RBI single in the tenth inning to give Tolna the tittle 3-2. In the last inning of the pressure packed game, Anderson came to bat and Enderlin's catcher Kevin Brantland reportedly said to him, "This is what we put on the stuff for. It just doesn't get any better than this"⁶

Jim Duffey organized an amateur baseball team in Fairview, Montana in 1977 and had seen it grow from playing in jeans, T-shirts, and mismatched caps to now having batting helmets, two sets of uniforms, and even a pitching machine for batting practice. Because there was no other amateur baseball in Montana, he had to draw players from a wide geographic area including Glendive (60 miles) and Sidney (50 miles), Montana and Williston (35 miles) in North Dakota. During the recently completed season, their closest away game was 280 miles round trip.⁷ Duffey had brought his Fairview squad to Jamestown (700 miles round trip) every year and after

⁵ *Jamestown Sun*, August 9, 1989

⁶ *Jamestown Sun*, August 19, 1989

⁷ *Jamestown Sun*, August 15, 1990, "Baseball Lives on in Fairview"

eleven consecutive first-round losses they finally won their first ever tournament game in the 1990 tournament by beating Kulm-Fredonia.

The other feel-good story in the early rounds of the 1990 Class A tournament was Carrington's forty-four-year-old left-handed pitcher Terry Otto was competing in his twenty-fifth consecutive state tournament. The New Rockford teacher began as a pickup with Pettibone back in 1965 and during his long career had appeared in the tournament with Red Willow, Gackle, Kulm, New Rockford, Finley and both Jamestown teams, the Elks and Merchants. He rarely pitched a complete game anymore but picked up wins in relief in Carrington's first two tournament games.

But in the end, it came down to the Enderlin powerhouse again. After the Indies won consecutive Class A titles in 1987 and 1988, there was some talk about moving them up to the AA division. But that discussion was tabled after they lost to Tolna in the 1989 Class A title game. In the 1990 tournament, they easily got by Rolette, Langdon, Mayville, and Carrington and faced the Jamestown VFW/Midwest Clinic Merchants in the title game. Jamestown went out to an early 6-1 lead, but Enderlin stormed back with a grand slam by Dean Tosseth and a three-run blast by Mike Opheim to win 13-7. Enderlin's winning pitcher Kyle Davison performed a rare feat when he recorded all of the putouts in the seventh inning by picking three runners off first base. Scott Radloff blasted five homeruns in the tournament (two of them into the James River) and knocked in eighteen runs in five games to earn the Class A MVP.

Right-handed pitcher Rick Helling⁸ led Fargo to the 1989 American Legion state championship and the national tournament. He was selected in the 13th round of the 1990 major league baseball draft but did not sign and chose to continue playing at a junior college in Illinois. He joined up with Fargo 3 Star who won their first two games of the 1990 Class AA tournament and faced the Jamestown Elks who avenged last year's opening round loss to Wahpeton with a 19-1 thrashing in a rematch. Bill Short hit a bloop RBI single to right in the ninth inning for the go-ahead run and Helling retired the Elks side in the bottom of the inning to preserve the 7-6 win and pick up his second win of the tournament.

The number of teams participating in the state tournament had been declining in recent years, so in 1991 the state association decided to split the tournament into three Classes: A, AA, and AAA. It was thought this would increase interest by giving more teams, especially those from small towns, a chance to play for a championship. In the Class A division, Velva rapped out forty-nine hits in three tournament wins, including nineteen in a 16-3 win over Napoleon in the title game. Brad Feist, hit a two-run homer and allowed just two earned runs and three hits in seven innings pitched, to win his second game of the tournament and was named MVP. Enderlin rolled to their fourth championship in five years taking the Class AA title with 9-0 shutouts of

⁸ Helling later attended Stanford University and was selected by the Texas Rangers in the first round of the 1992 draft. He went on to a nine-year career in major league baseball

Thompson and Devils Lake and then scored nine eighth inning runs in a 14-8 win over the Jamestown VFW/Midwest Clinic Merchants in the championship game.

Four teams entered the Class AAA division in the 1991 tournament. Fargo Athlete's Choice (last year's 3 Star AA champions) held off Grand Forks Gerrells 13-12 in a wild game. They took a 13-5 lead into the ninth inning, but Gerrells scored seven runs to cut the lead to one before relief pitcher Bill Short struck out Chuck Evans with the tying run on second to end the game. Athlete's Choice hoped to have last year's MVP Rick Helling, who was playing for Team USA in the Pan American Games in Cuba, back for the title game but he couldn't make plane connections from Havana to Fargo in time. Their opponents were the Jamestown Elks who downed Minot 13-5 in their first game. Cory Anderson mixed a good fastball with his slider and Mark Fleischer and the Hogan brothers, Wayne and Doug, each homered in a 13-2 win for the Elks in the AAA title game.

Shortly after the 1991 tournament ended, the grandstand at McElroy Park caught fire. Metal bleachers may have been cheaper and required less maintenance, but it was decided to rebuild the grandstand to resemble to original green wooden seats as closely as possible. The park was owned by the city, and ordinances required the Park Board to accept the lowest bid, even though the time estimated for the repair project was longer than higher dollar bids. This meant McElroy Park was unavailable for most of the summer of 1992 and therefore the Merchants, Elks, American Legion Eagles, and Jamestown Jimmies college team had to drive over to Valley City for most of their "home games"

The Rolla NoDaks, having played most of their games in Canadian tournaments, entered the 1992 Class A tourney with an impressive 23-6 record, but they were upset in the second round by the Kulm Gophers who came in with a record of just 9-14. Rolla had a 3-0 lead in the fifth but the Gophers, who also drew players from Ellendale and Edgeley, rallied to tie and their ninth-place batter, Lee Albrecht, homered in the bottom of the ninth inning to give them a 4-3 win. In the Class A championship game Rolette's Darrell Thomas' RBI single in the sixth scored his cousin Larry with the go-head run. However, Kulm mounted a rally in the ninth when they put runners on second and third with one out, but a failed suicide squeeze attempt resulted in the man at third being trapped off the base, and Rolette hung on for a 4-3 win and Class A championship. Rob Hovland, one of the few players on the Rolette team not named Thomas, pitched a complete game victory – his second of the tournament while allowing only two earned runs in eighteen innings – and was named most valuable player.

Dean Tosseth coaxed a bases loaded walk in the ninth inning as defending Class AA champion Enderlin survived a scare in their opening round game and edged Velva 5-4. The Indies breezed past Wyndmere 12-0 in the semi-finals and faced the Jamestown VFW Merchants in the championship. Jamestown took an 8-6 lead into the seventh but Enderlin scored seven runs in their half of the inning, highlighted by a two-run single by Tosseth, a two-run double by catcher Kevin Brantland, and a two-run homer by Mike Opheim, to take a wild 13-10 win and their fifth

AA title in the past six years. Shortstop Tyler Schlect, had six hits in their three games, reaching base in thirteen of his sixteen plate appearances, and was named Class AA MVP.

Jamestown Elks starting pitcher Doug Hogan couldn't throw as hard as he did when he was in professional baseball fifteen years earlier, and Grand Forks Gerrells batters teed off on his fastball to take an early 5-2 lead in the opening round of the Class AAA tournament. Hogan switched to his curve, at one point retiring eleven straight batters, and his teammates battled back for an 8-6 win. They faced Fargo Athlete's Choice in the championship and decided the game early when they scored eight second inning runs, highlighted by a three-run homer from pitcher Cory Anderson. The 9-3 win meant the Elks sixth title in ten years and Anderson, who pitched a complete game, was MVP.

The NDABI officers and commissioners usually met between the games on championship Sunday, and the gathering on August 16, 1992, was very discouraging for the current state of amateur baseball in North Dakota. Jack Brown announced that only nineteen teams participated in this year's tournament, down from twenty-nine just three years earlier. Before the season, seven towns indicated an interest in starting amateur baseball, but only Wyndmere actually formed a team. Teams in Fargo and Williston disbanded before the state tournament and Fairview, Montana only showed up with eight payers for their first-round game. Brown estimated the tournament lost between \$3,000 and \$4,000, partially due to fewer corporate donations from Jamestown businesses. Jack's son Dick Brown said, "This is a low point - I'm down. It's to the point where I'm worrying about teams showing up and rosters. It's come to a head; we're either going to get this bumped up ... or else it's going to fold."⁹ The association decided to tour the state to drum up interest in amateur baseball and to hold a "crisis" meeting during the winter.

The three classes of the 1993 state tournament featured one repeat champion and two teams who won their first title after years of frustration. In class A, Kulm beat Rolla 12-3 in their opener, edged Berthold 9-8 next by picking a Berthold runner off third in the ninth, and downed Beulah-Hazen 6-5 to reach the championship game for the second straight year. Fairview won their opener and their second-round game as Cory Hanson went six for six with two homers, the last one a game winner in the bottom of the ninth, to send them to a 9-8 win over Fordville and a matchup with Kulm for the championship. Fairview had been faithfully driving the more than 300 miles (one way) to the tournament for nearly twenty years, and only once had they won a game. But this time they took home the Class A championship. Kelly Heller won his third game of the tournament, striking out fourteen, and eventual MVP Cory Hanson added a two-run homer and a run scoring double as Fairview cruised to a 13-2 win over Kulm for the title.

⁹ *Jamestown Sun*, August 6, 1992

Devils Lake entered the Class AA tournament with two former professional players on their roster. Pitcher Chuck Bush, who had played college ball at Mayville State, had spent the previous two years in the Milwaukee Brewers minor league system before being released that spring. The other was Jamie Hoffner who a few months earlier had been participating in drills with star pitchers Dwight Gooden and Frank Viola at the New York Mets spring training camp. After starting his college career at UND Lake Region in his hometown, Hoffner transferred to Mayville State for a year and then to Mankato (Minnesota) State. There he sat out a year due to an injury but before ever playing for Mankato was drafted by the Mets and began a three-year career in professional baseball. He hit .271 at Class AA Binghamton, New York but another first baseman, Alan Zinter, who was a first-round pick of the Mets, was kept (although he hit only .223), while Hoffner, a 52nd round pick, was released.¹⁰

The Lakers won their opening round game 15-0 over Grafton, paced by a grand slam and six RBIs by Hoffner, and beat Velva 3-2 in their next game. In the other side of the AA bracket, the Jamestown Miller Lite Merchants, who had lost the last two title games, came in with a record of 17-6. Their key addition was infielder Tomo Ohmori, a Japanese exchange student at Jamestown College who hit .466 for the season. They scored eleven runs in the first inning and rolled past Tolna 18-2 in their opening game. The Merchants got by Surrey 9-4 setting up a championship game with Devils Lake. Paul Hanson and Tyson Siegel each hit three-run homers and the Merchants finally claimed their first AA title with an 8-3 win over Devils Lake.

Six teams entered the 1993 Class AAA tournament which began on Sunday August 8 after a ceremony changing the name of McElroy Park to Jack Brown Stadium. The Elks entered the tournament with a record of 22-3, two of their losses being to Glyndon, Minnesota and the other to Athlete's Choice of Fargo, their only loss to a North Dakota team since being defeated by the same team in the 1990 state championship game. Although they were all now in their thirties, the core of Mark Fleischer, Wayne and Doug Hogan, and Bob Piatz remained and pitcher Cory Anderson, catcher Buff Murray, and Jim Dew all lived in Valley City but drove over to Jamestown to play for the Elks. In opening round games, Athlete's Choice downed Grand Forks Gerrells 11-2- and 36-year-old Doug Hogan scattered four hits over seven innings as the Elks got by the Fargo-Moorhead Miners.

The winners then took on the Grand Forks Air Base and Enderlin, who moved up a class this year after winning the last three AA titles, both of whom received first round byes. Mark Fleischer and Doug Hogan each hit three-run homers to support Cory Anderson's two-hit pitching as the Elks eliminated the Air Base 8-1. The wind was blowing out in the other semi-final game resulting in a combined six home runs. Enderlin's Mike Opheim hit two, one a grand slam, but Athlete's Choice ended up on top 16-15 in ten innings. In the championship game, Athlete's Choice held a 6-3 lead in the seventh, but Wayne Hogan's two-run homer rallied the Elks to a six-all tie in the ninth inning and the Elks thought they had won it in the bottom of the

¹⁰ *Jamestown Sun*, August 10, 1993

inning. With a runner on third, Doug Hogan hit what appeared to be a game-winning sacrifice fly but Cory Anderson, the runner on first, left the bag early and was out on an appeal, nullifying the run. The next inning, the Elks loaded the bases on a hit and two Fargo errors, and Darron Orr scored the winning run from third on a passed ball. The 7-6 win gave the Elks their third straight Class AAA title and their seventh in the last eleven years.

Kindred beat Hope-Finley 10-5 in one of the semifinal games of the 1994 state Class A tournament and in the other, Fordville pitcher Marcus Oulette relieved the starter in the first inning and allowed only one hit the rest of the game as Fordville easily beat Wyndmere 17-2. In the championship, Fordville's Grant Skibicki went four for five with four runs batted in, including a two-run double in the fifth that broke a 4-4 tie as Fordville beat Kindred 10-5. Oulette, who won all four of his team's games in the tournament allowing only 18 hits in 34 innings, was named Class A MVP.

Rolette reached the finals in Class AA with a 5-3 win over Velva. Enderlin, back in Class AA after participating in the AAA division last year, won the other semi-final game beating Fairview 4-1 behind a four-hitter by University of North Dakota pitcher Jason Milbrandt. Enderlin won still another state title by downing Rolette 13-0. Catcher Kevin Brantland, the tournament MVP, went four for five and Milbrandt tossed another four-hitter in the shutout victory.

Defending champion Jamestown Elks had four batters over the .400 mark during the season (Doug Hogan .474, Bob Piatz .450, Wayne Hogan .415, and Mark Fleischer, .406,) and entered the 1995 Class AAA tournament as the favorite. They were joined by Grand Forks Gerrells and the Jamestown Merchants, who had moved up from Class AA. The fourth team in the AAA tournament - a double-elimination format this year- was Quad City, so named because the team consisted of players from the four towns of Bisbee, Minto, Munich, and Grafton. The Quad City player/manager was Marty McDonald, an all-around athlete from Munich and a member of the baseball team at Jamestown College.

The Elks were upset in their opener when Quad City scored four runs in the bottom of the ninth, highlighted by a two-out, two-strike homer by McDonald off of Cory Anderson, to give Quad City a 9-8 win. The Elks came through the loser's bracket by beating Gerrells 8-3 on two homers by Doug Hogan, and downed Quad City 8-5 in a rematch. Meanwhile, the Merchants went undefeated, eliminating Gerrells and Quad City, to earn the right to face the one-loss Elks in the finals. The Merchants showed they could be competitive in class AAA, but the Elks proved they were still the class of the division, by powering past the Merchants by the scores of 9-2 and 11-5 for the title. Mark Fleischer hit two two-run-homers (coming in the first inning of both games), Steve Olson, and Doug and Wayne Hogan each hit two-run shots, and James Fischer hit a three-run homer in the sweep. Wayne Hogan, who hit four homers and knocked in nine runs in the tournament, was named MVP.

As players gathered in Jamestown for the 1995 state tournament, they had just heard the news that Minnesota Twins first baseman Kent Hrbek had retired after fourteen seasons and that New York Yankee legend Mickey Mantle, a boyhood hero for many North Dakota amateur players, died of cancer. These events were reminders to appreciate the opportunity to play baseball as long as they could, because someday, inevitably, it would come to an end for them as well.

Class A would have a new champion this year as last year's titlist, Fordville, moved up to Class AA. The Berthold Bruins made a run by winning their first game in the tournament since 1984 by beating Rolette 4-2 in the opening round and then Wyndmere in the semis. Berthold manager Francis Hall was so looking forward to the championship game that he skipped his brother's wedding scheduled for the same weekend. They would face Tolna who advanced to the championship game by beating Beulah-Hazen 16-5. Winning pitcher Wade Snyder helped himself by hitting two homers. Right-hander Adam Nelson threw a three-hitter and Kent Forde and Scott Sand each hit two-run homers as Tolna easily beat Berthold 12-0 for the Class A title.

In Class AA, Velva trailed 7-4 in the ninth inning but used extra "effort" (their nickname was the Effertz, named for manager Roger Effertz) to score five runs in their last at bat to down Fordville 9-7 for their first state championship.

Former Devils Lake standout Jamie Hoffner was now on the coaching staff at the University of North Dakota, so he joined the Grand Forks Gerrells club that featured several UND players, including Steve Dunn, the Sioux pitching coach. They reached the finals in Class AAA when Dunn struck out fourteen in an 8-6 win over the Jamestown Merchants. The Jamestown Elks also reached the title game after Cory Anderson took a no hitter into the sixth in an 11-2 win over Enderlin and Bob Piatz's three-run triple in a five run fifth was the key hit in a 10-5 win over Quad City in the semi-finals. The Elks played their worst game in several seasons in the final. They committed four errors, three by shortstop Piatz, and stranded seventeen runners, seven in the last three innings. Hoffner and right-fielder Dale Czapiewski homered, and starter Darrin Juve battled wildness, throwing 140 pitches in 7 2/3 innings, but Gerrells hung on to beat the Elks 7-3 for the 1995 AAA championship