

## Small Towns Still Relevant (1975 – 1986)

1975 was a transition year for two of the best players ever in the Beaver Valley League. Earlier that summer a seventeen-year-old teenager named Bob Piatz took over the role of coach of the Napoleon American Legion team when the regular coach left town. More will be said about Piatz later, but when Braddock picked him up for the 1975 tournament it marked the first of many state tournament appearances for Piatz over the next three decades.

This year's tournament was the twenty-second consecutive and final one for Braddock pitcher Andy Schmidt. Beginning in 1953, when he was sixteen years old, he played as a member of his hometown Braddock team eight times, and fourteen more as a pickup. Schmidt's best season may have been 1961 when he was the winning pitcher in all ten Braddock Beaver Valley League games. He worked as the assistant manager at the Farmer's Elevator in Braddock and volunteered his time coaching the town's youth Midget and Pee Wee baseball times since 1956.

A new Class AA champion was assured in 1975 because IDSO Sales didn't field a team, in fact, the Fargo Fitzgerald League didn't even operate that summer. It was joked that Absaraka (population 32) was the largest city in Cass County with an amateur baseball team. Of the four teams that did enter the Class AA tournament, the Jamestown Elks edged Dickinson 8-6 in one semifinal game and a twelve run third inning powered Bismarck to a 14-3 win over the Grand Forks Chiefs in the other. Bismarck was thought to have the advantage in the title game, having beaten the Elks in each of their five meetings during the season. Bismarck took a 3-2 lead late in the game, but the Elks pushed across two runs in the top of the ninth. Hank Jeske went all the way in a four-hitter as Jamestown won the Class AA title 4-3

Twenty-one teams entered the Class A tournament. Absaraka upset last-year's runner-up Zeeland, when Lowell Schweigert issued a ninth inning bases-loaded walk plating the winning run in a 5-4 win. Defending champ New Rockford won their first two games and Steve Howe outpitched Gordy Roberge in a 5-1 win over Rolla in the semi-finals. They would face Bowman, a 2-1 winner over Lansford in their semi-final match up. Howe, playing in the field, had four hits as New Rockford defeated Bowman 14-4 in the Class A final. In the overall championship game, Howe was back on the mound, and he fired a complete game two-hitter with a dozen strikeouts as New Rockford beat the Jamestown Elks 6-2.

The highlight of the opening round of the 1976 Class A tournament was a no-hitter by Lansford's Jim Limke over Edgeley. He struck out nineteen and allowed just one base runner, a walk on a 3-2 count. Tolna had easy wins over Gackle and Kulm in the early rounds and got by New Rockford 5-4 in the semi-finals despite eighteen strikeouts by New Rockford starter Scott Howe. Eighteen-year-old Mark Johnson, who had an 8-1 record in legion ball, was the winning pitcher for Tolna in his first start in amateur baseball. In the other bracket Hatton won close games over Hettinger-Bowman and Lansford and behind fifteen whiffs by Rod Enerson, beat

LaMoure 12-2 in the semis. In the Class A championship game, Hatton pounded out twenty hits, four by shortstop Bill Koering, and they easily downed Tolna 11-5.

At the ANDABL spring meeting the previous April, directors passed a resolution to disqualify any player or team from the state tournament who participated with an NBC team or played in an NBC tournament after June 10. This meant Dickinson, who played in an NBC tourney earlier in the summer, was not eligible for the Class AA tournament. Of the teams participating, Rob Mihulka's four-hitter sent Grand Forks to an 11-1 win over Williston in one semi-final game, Dale Normandin hit a three-run homer in the seventh, and Doug Hogan struck out fourteen, sending the Jamestown Elks to a -3 win over Bismarck in the other semi-final.

In the Class AA title game, Grand Forks committed ten errors through the first five innings allowing the Elks to take a 7-3 lead. The *Sun* said "the Grand Forks infield played defense like a group of palsy victims"<sup>1</sup>. But pitcher Rob Mihulka's homer in the seventh tied the game at 7-7 and Leon Domsie stroked an RBI single in the tenth giving Grand Forks an 8-7 win. In the overall championship game, Grand Forks outfielder Jim Reinhardt hit a first inning grand slam and Frank Leblanc hit a solo shot to stake them to a 5-0 lead and chase Hatton starter Gale Skjoiten from the game. Hatton battled back, led by a Koering and then he started an eighth inning rally with a double and Hatton came back to win 6-5. Rod Enerson, who replaced Skjoiten, (and who would be named MVP) held Grand Forks to two hits over the final eight innings.

Defending champion Hatton moved up to Class AA in 1977 so the A tournament was up for grabs. In quarter final action, Mike Kalbrener knocked in six runs as Fordville downed Absaraka 12-3, catcher Terry Theil had five hits in a Berthold 7-3 win over Jud, Tolna downed Napoleon 3-2, and Lansford beat Ellendale 5-3. The semi-final round games were dominated by pitching. Fordville's Lon Enerson had a no-hitter through 7 1/3 innings, finally allowing just one hit, in beating Berthold 5-0 and Tonla's Dorrie Peterson held Lansford to two hits until the ninth inning in their win. In the championship game, Fordville outhit Tolna 14-8, and took a 5-1 lead, but stranded fifteen baserunners and Tolna took the title 8-6.

In the Class AA quarterfinals, left fielder Dave Kalil hit two homers to power Williston to a 9-2 win over defending A champ Hatton, and Dickinson downed Valley City. Centerfielder Dave Normandin's two homers helped the Jamestown Elks defeat Devils Lake 11-2 and Scott Howe pitched New Rockford to a 6-2 win over Grand Forks. In the semi-finals Doug Walters pitched Dickinson to a 2-1 win over Williston and Normandin got four more hits, and stole three bases, as the Elks got past New Rockford. In the final, Ray Bruels pitched a strong game and Dickinson broke the game open with a four-run seventh, keyed by a RBI double by Hank Biesiot, and went on to win the AA title 9-2. In the overall championship, Walters pitched a complete game seven hitter, shutting out Tolna until the ninth, in a 12-4 win.

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<sup>1</sup> *Jamestown Sun*, August 23, 1976

Most-valuable-player Walters led the all-tournament team selected by official scorer John Holman who watched all twenty-five games over eleven days. The burly 6'5" fast baller was the winning pitcher in three of Dickinson's four tournament wins, allowing just fifteen hits and three earned runs in twenty-seven innings pitched. The twenty-two-year-old Dickinson State graduate was preparing to further his education in accounting at the University of Mary on Bismarck. The all-tournament team also featured the debut of a player who would be one of the top amateur players over the next several years. Outfielder/pitcher Scott Radloff, who hit three homeruns in the tournament, was picked up by Absaraka after playing high school ball in Chafee and with the legion team in Casselton. Radloff was the first legion pickup ever named to an all-tournament team.

At one time the ANDABL required all affiliated teams to join leagues with the league champion earning the right to play in the state tournament. With fewer and fewer teams being formed each year it became more difficult to find enough teams within a close geographic vicinity to form a league, so many chose to play independently, scheduling games against whatever opponents they could find. In the spring of 1978, enough teams were found to form a six-team LaMoure-Logan League and Bowbells, Lansford, Berthold, and Makoti formed the Northwest League. However, Rolla, Fairview, and Tolna were all unaffiliated and Dickinson and Hettinger, both of whom played independently in 1977, tried to encourage Beach and New England to form teams in hopes of resurrecting the old State Line League, but that never materialized. As a sign of the times, one of the oldest and most successful leagues, the Beaver Valley, dissolved, with the lone remaining member, Zeeland, joining a league in South Dakota.<sup>2</sup>

Once the 1978 Class A state tournament got under way, Lowell Schweigert threw a one-hit shutout as Zeeland downed Makoti 2-0 in one quarterfinal game and Ellendale's Dave Gramlow allowed hits five hits in a 7-0 shutout of pre-tournament favorite Berthold in another. Harvey shortstop Chuck Huber's three-run homer was the difference in a 3-2 win over Lansford and Absaraka center fielder Scott Radloff socked three homers and drove in nine runs in an 18-7 rout of Kulm to complete the opening round. Gramlow pitched Ellendale to a 6-2 win over Zeeland in one of the semi-final games and Harvey's Scott Howe defeated Absaraka 9-2 in the other. In the championship game Harvey had a 5-4 lead after five innings but Ellendale manager Bob Fuller knocked in the go-ahead runs with a double and then plated two insurance runs with another double in the ninth as Ellendale took the title 9-6. Left-hander Darcy Ruff, Wishek's legion coach and a pickup from Fredonia, added a homer and pitched the complete game victory.

Jeff Feichtner allowed only two hits and struck out eighteen as the Jamestown Elks beat Valley City 8-0 in the first of the Class AA semi-final games. Doug Walters pitched a complete game and shortstop Kim Hilt hit a run scoring single in the ninth inning as Dickinson edged New Rockford 5-4 in the second semi-final. The team's top pitchers, Feichtner and Walters faced off in the AA championship and Dickinson came out on top 5-3. In the overall championship,

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<sup>2</sup> Jamestown Sun, May 8, 1978.

Dickinson starter Mark Hadley struggled with his control, walking six batters and throwing three wild pitches helping Ellendale to a 7-2 win. Gramlow, on the mound again, allowed just five hits and both runs scored by Dickinson were unearned.

The Ellendale championship was an example of how a team can have a mediocre summer (they had a record of 5-7 coming into the tournament), but with the help of pickup players, reeled off five straight wins in Jamestown. Described by their manager as “couple of college players but mostly broken-down farmers”<sup>3</sup>. Ellendale benefitted most from the addition of Gramlow. Living on a farm near Fullerton, he was an all-state basketball player at Dickey Central High School and had just been named the MVP of the state American Legion tournament. The seventeen-year-old, who still had another season of legion eligibility left, used a good fastball, a change up and mixed in a knuckleball to win four of the five Ellendale victories. He allowed just one earned run and struck out twenty-nine in thirty-six innings pitched and became the second (after Radloff) legion pick up to be named MVP of the state amateur tournament.

Pat Hennesey struck out sixteen and hit a homer as Berthold upset defending champions Ellendale in the opening round of the 1979 State Class A tournament. In another early round game, Rod Enerson of Fordville whiffed nineteen in a 4-2 win over Makoti. Both Berthold and Fordville lost in the quarterfinal round, leaving four teams remaining: Zeeland, Minto, Harvey and Rolla. Pitching was the story in the semi-final games. Lowell Schweigert threw a five hitter in a 5-0 Zeeland win over Minto and nineteen-year-old Mitch Laducer allowed just one hit in 3 1/3 relief innings as Rolla edged Harvey 5-4. In the A championship game, Zeeland starter Greg Becker issued nine walks and Rolla scored three runs in the bottom of the eighth to take a 6-3 win.

Hatton, Breckenridge-Wahpeton Hardees, Jamestown Elks, and Meyer Construction of Dickinson were opening round winners in the AA tournament. Greg Walters was busy in Dickinson's 7-4 win over Valley City. He hit three home runs and, on the mound, he walked nine and struck out sixteen. The Elks beat Hardees in one semi-final matchup and the other was a pitching duel between Bill Koering of Hatton and Walters. A two-run homer by designated hitter Gary Privatsky was the difference in a 2-1 Dickinson win. In the championship catcher Bob Henne stoked a run-scoring double in the fourteenth inning to lift Dickinson to a 7-6 win over the Elks. Dickinson's Mark Sandman, who allowed one earned in in 8 1/3 innings (in relief of Walters) was the winning pitcher. In the overall title game Dickinson starter Jim Schroeder scattered thirteen hits, but Rolla stranded fifteen base runners in a 4-1 win for Dickinson.

When the 1978 tournament ended, *Jamestown Sun* columnist Jim Nelson described a very pessimistic picture of the future of amateur baseball in North Dakota. He noted that fan interest, and therefore attendance continued to diminish, partly because baseball was no longer “faddish” as he described it, and that people would rather watch games on TV than come out to Jack Brown Stadium. He thought that an eleven-day tournament was too long to hold fan's interest

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<sup>3</sup> Jamestown Sun, August 22, 1978.

and that the state amateur tournament was almost anti-climactic after the American Legion tournament, which garnered more newspaper coverage, was played a couple of weeks earlier.

Crowds of 2,000 or more were common at championship games in earlier years, so when less than 300 showed up for the title games, even though a Jamestown team was participating, Nelson commented again. Writing under the headline “Fan Interest Just About Dead” Nelson stated that “amateur baseball in North Dakota has just about had it.”<sup>4</sup> Everyone agreed there were problems, but there was no consensus on solutions. There was some discussion about reducing the number of teams in the tournament, but some association members recalled that when they went to a system of regional qualifiers several years earlier, many teams objected and dropped amateur baseball.

The ANDABL, now incorporated under the name North Dakota Amateur Baseball, Inc., recognized an eleven-day tournament was too long, and a hardship for some teams and their fans to travel, especially for mid-week games. President Doug Hall even suggested a couple of changes that would eventually be enacted, changing the format to double elimination and holding the different class tournaments on separate weekends. Things were so desperate that someone even mentioned moving the tournament out of Jamestown. But, of the four largest cities in the state, only Grand Forks had any kind of amateur baseball presence, and among the next largest cities, Williston was deemed to remote, and Dickinson lacked adequate facilities, so the tourney remained in Jamestown.

The Jamestown Elks, under third-year manager Dick Brown, had finished as runners-up in the last two Class A tournaments. In 1980 they strengthened their squad by adding Kelly Trautman and Darwin Subart (who both drove over from Robinson for games) along with pitcher Jeff Bata from Mayville State and centerfielder Bob Piatz. They entered the tournament with a 17-3 record and smacked three home runs in a nine-run fourth inning in a 9-0 opening round win over the Grand Forks Air Base. Their semi-final round game with the Valley City Merchants, a 12-6 win, was one of the sloppiest and longest games anyone could remember in the tournament. The teams combined for thirty-two walks and thirty-four runners left on base.

Breckenridge-Wahpeton, in their first season in amateur ball, came in with a record of 31-11 and defeated Hatton in the opening round, despite fifteen strike outs by Hatton’s Bill Koering. B-W lefty Mike Randall carried a no-hitter into the ninth as they downed Grand Forks (who had beaten defending AA champ Dickinson in the first round) 4-2 in the semis. In the championship game, B-W starter Al Peterson was forced to leave the game after one inning due to a sore arm, and Elks batters hit six homers off of relievers, including two by Subart, in an 8-2 win, giving the Elks their first AA championship since 1970.

Harvey entered the Class A tournament having played just five games all season (winning all five). Chuck Evans struck out fifteen in an opening round 9-2 win over Makoti and Scott Howe

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<sup>4</sup> *Jamestown Sun*, August 22, 1979

outpitched Jim Limke in a 7-4 win over Lansford in the quarter finals. Harvey then got by Tolna 7-6 to reach the championship game. Their opponents were Rugby who rode two homers by Dale Sanderson in an 8-1 win over Bowbells, followed up by wins over Kulm and Rolla. In the championship game<sup>5</sup>, Evans struck out sixteen and Jason Lorenz had four hits in an 8-5 win. In the overall title game, Lorenz, who just graduated from Harvey High School the previous spring and would be named tournament MVP, was given the start and he was the winning pitcher in the 5-1 Harvey win.

During the summer of 1981 North Dakota lost one of its baseball icons. Harold “Pinky” Kraft passed away of heart failure followed by a stroke on June 10. Kraft grew up in Enderlin where he was an all-state basketball player in high school and a star on the school and American Legion baseball teams. He went on to pitch at the University of Minnesota before joining the Army in 1942. He was an artillery captain at the battle of the Bulge on France, and he sustained severe burns requiring a hospital stay of more than a year. He attended graduate school at the University of North Dakota and was named head baseball coach, a post he held for twenty-six years. Although Kraft had a losing record, he always stressed execution of fundamentals over wins and losses. He was a great supporter of all levels of baseball in the state, especially the American Legion programs. Rog Higgins (of KFYZ in Bismarck) said, “...if there was anything going on with baseball, Pinky was there” and his friend Jack Brown recalled “...wherever he went he was promoting all phases of baseball”<sup>6</sup>

When fans came to watch ball games at McElroy Park, they were greeted by eighty-year-old Phil Boehm, and his wife Jessie, who had been selling tickets and manning the front gate for as long as anyone could remember. In fact, the couple began right after World War II and recalled the glory days of amateur baseball during the 1950s when sometimes more than 3,000 fans would pack the grandstand, bleachers and even stand along the baselines for state tournament games. The Boehms echoed the opinion of many others citing the rise of softball, both for spectators and participants, as the primary reason for the decline in fan interest in amateur baseball.<sup>7</sup>

The amateur baseball association had to re-shuffle their 1981 tournament schedule because Jamestown was also hosting the state American Legion tournament that summer. Nonetheless, thirty-seven teams entered the tournament, up five participants from the previous year, and the field included eight entries in the Class AA division. The amateurs opened the weekend of August 7-9, then took a break for the legion tournament, and then resumed the following weekend Friday August 16 and wrapped up Sunday the 23rd. The Class A semifinal games were two tight, well-pitched games. Nick Jofille outpitched Kevin Hilzendeger in a 2-0 Harvey win over Zeeland and Jim Limke threw a complete game as Lansford downed Langdon 4-3 in the other semi-final. Harvey saved their ace, Chuck Evans (who had struck out eighteen in a 5-0

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<sup>5</sup> Due to rain on Sunday, both championship games, and the overall title game were moved to Monday.

<sup>6</sup> *Bismarck Tribune*, July 11, 1981

<sup>7</sup> *Jamestown Sun*, August 19, 1981

opening round shutout of Bowbells) for the championship and he allowed just four hits as Harvey took the A title with a 9-1 win over Lansford.

In the Class AA semi-final, Mayville's Bill Koering homered in the second inning, and started a three-run rally with a single in the eighth to lead the Red Caps to a 4-3 win over the Bismarck-Mandan Twins. In the championship game, Dave Gurbada went four for five with four runs scored and Mayville scored eleven runs over the last three innings in a 17-12 win over the Jamestown Elks. In the overall championship game, Gurbada homered in the first inning, so Harvey pitchers walked him his next four plate appearances. His teammates, namely Koering with four runs batted in, picked up the slack as Mayville won their first state title since 1966 with a 17-4 win. In addition to Koering and MVP Gurbada, outfielders Mike Berry, and his brother Scott, who would replace his dad Al as head baseball coach at Mayville State, also made the all-tournament team.

Between 1962 and 1974, Fargo teams won ten of thirteen overall state amateur baseball championships. After the IDSO Sales championship in 1974, there was a decline in amateur baseball participation in the Fargo area. One reason, at least according to the *Jamestown Sun*, was that IDSO recruited statewide, which was discouraging for players hoping to play on a local team. But the city always maintained a strong American Legion (Post 2) program providing a pool of talent for the amateur program. Fargo Village West Liquors had a respectable showing at the 1981 Class AA tournament, reaching the semi-final round, and brought another strong team to the 1982 tourney.

After downing Devils Lake 10-0 in their opening round game, Village West needed late inning rallies in their next two games. Mike Kraft hit a three-run homer in the eighth inning in a 6-5 win over Breckenridge-Wahpeton and Brian Barnholdt hit a two-out two-run homer in the tenth inning as they defeated the Jamestown Elks 6-4 in the semi-finals. Mayville worked their way through the other side of the Class AA bracket with wins over the Bismarck Twins and Valley City. In the title game, Village West starting pitcher Terry Marquardt allowed five runs in the first three innings to Mayville but blanked them the rest of the way. His teammates smacked six extra-base hits, including another two-run homer by Barnholdt, and Village West rallied for an 8-5 win, the first state title for a Fargo team in seven years.

The Gun & Reel Sorts Shop team rounded up a few more sponsors including Halsey's Shoe Repair, Midwest Clinic, and Harty Insurance, and this year changed their name to the Jamestown Merchants. They were led by the Nyhus brother battery, pitcher Corey and catcher Curt, both doctors in town. They swept through their first four games of the Class A tournament with wins over the Grand Forks Air Base, Finley, Bottineau, and an 8-2 win over the Valley City Merchants on the semi-finals. Cory Nyhus won three of the games, allowing just one earned run and fifteen hits in 24 1/3innings pitched. He got the start in the championship game against Langdon, who advanced to the title game when in the semi-final round, Enderlin right-fielder Lyle Halverson dropped a fly ball in the third inning leading to five unearned runs for Langdon

in 6-2 win. All of the innings in a short amount of time proved too much for Nyhus as Langdon pounded him for fourteen hits in a 10-2 win in Class A title game

On June 13, 1983, in the second game of the season, Jamestown Elks outfielder Bob Piatz, a twenty-five-year-old certified public accountant, failed to get a hit in a 13-3 win over Valley City at McElroy Park. What was unusual was that it was the first time in the past seventy-three games, stretching over the last four seasons, where Piatz did not hit safely. During the 1980 season he once reached base in 19 consecutive plate appearances. He was hitting so well during the streak that at one point in 1982 he went three for four in a game, but only raised his batting average five points, to .575. His consecutive games hitting streak was written up in the "Faces in the Crowd" section of the September 5, 1983, issue of *Sports Illustrated*, a national publication.

The Elks lineup also featured catcher Scott Monson, Mark Fleischer, and the Hogan brothers, Wayne and Doug, and they entered the 1983 tournament with a record of 23-6 and a team batting average of .380. The Elks were so deep and talented that Piatz wasn't even named the team's MVP; the award going to Fleischer who hit .510 and posted a 4-1 pitching record. Piatz hit a grand slam in an 18-1 rout of the Grand Forks Air Base and the Elks hit three more homers in a 15-3 win over Valley City in the quarter final round, but they faced stiffer competition in the semifinals. Wayne Hogan pitched a complete game shutout in a 3-0 win over Dickinson and his brother Doug was the winner in a 2-1 win over Mayville in the Class AA title game.

The Class A quarter final games were highlighted by four tight, well-pitched games. Lansford's Bill Triplett shutout Finley 4-0 and Larry Thomas of Rolla blanked New England 3-0. Thirty-year-old Darry Gleave whiffed fifteen and allowed just three hits as Berthold beat Kulm 4-2 and Rob Hovland tossed a three-hit shutout as Rugby edged Langdon 1-0 in the last quarterfinal. Berthold and Rolla won their semi-final games and Berthold prevailed in the A championship 4-2 behind a complete game win by Pat Hennessey.

In the overall title game, Doug Hogan hit a two-run homer in a six-run first inning and the Elks cruised to a 14-7 win over Berthold. He and Fleischer, who each won two games in the tournament, were named co-MVPs. The title, the Elks first since 1970, was also notable for the fact it was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first baseball team organized in Jamestown, the Fort Seward club of 1883.<sup>8</sup> Fifty years earlier, in 1933, a member of that team, pitcher Elmer Marrell, remembered that in those days great crowds gathered at the ball field then located between Fifth and Sixth Avenues in Jamestown. Merrell recalled that in those days none of the players wore fielding gloves, and the catcher, who stationed himself at the backstop instead of behind home plate, worked without a chest protector or shin guards.

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<sup>8</sup> During this period, the brother of Billy Sunday, one-time major league player and nationally known evangelist, played for Melville, North Dakota, a small town near Jamestown.



For many years George Heidt was a leader in amateur baseball in the Bismarck-Mandan community and was elected to the ND Amateur Baseball Hall of Fame. He is mostly remembered as an outstanding pitcher, and later manager, of the Mandan Trainers. When he passed away in 1984 his widow made a memorial gift of \$5,000 to the state baseball association for the purpose of setting up a scholarship fund. An award of \$500 would be made each year to an amateur baseball player to attend a North Dakota college. Mrs. Heidt specifically requested the nomination committee be composed of the Hall of Fame committee in addition to Jack Brown and Al Meyer. The recipient of the first award, given out at the state championship game, was Todd Steckler of George's hometown of Mandan.

The defending AA champ Jamestown Elks had little trouble on their way to the 1984 championship game. In 102-degree heat Doug Hogan struck out twelve of the first thirteen Grafton batters he faced and cruised to a 14-3 win. Scott Monson's three-run homer ignited a five run first inning and the Elks held on to beat Devils Lake 5-3 in the quarterfinals. Doug Hogan struck out fifteen and the Elks scored twelve unearned runs in the fifth inning in a 15-0 win over Valley City in the semifinals. Overall, in the tournament, Hogan struck out thirty and allowed just one earned run in 11 1/3 innings pitched.

The Mayville Red Caps had two close calls in the early round, edging Dickinson 7-6 in thirteen innings in their tournament opener and getting by the Jamestown Merchants 9-8 in the semifinals keyed by a bases loaded double by Jerry McLain in a five-run seventh. The semifinal games, featuring both Jamestown teams, the Elks and the Merchants. were said to have drawn the largest crowd," ...since back in the 40's" according to Tony Carlsacio.<sup>9</sup> Mayville veteran Bill Koering, a thirty-four-year-old teacher at Manvel, considered retiring from amateur baseball before the season, but the Red Caps were glad he decided to play one more year. In the class AA championship game Koering pitched a complete game 5-4 win over the Elks, his third win of the tournament, to give Mayville the title.

Rugby began their march through the Class A brackets with an 8-0 win over Tolna. Rob Hovland threw a two hitter and shortstop Nick Joliffe hit for the cycle (homerun, triple, double and single in the same game). They got by New England and Lansford in the quarters and semis and faced Finley in the Class A championship game. Rob Hovland, who would be named Class A MVP, came in to relieve starter Chuck Evans in the eighth and pitched five innings of shutout ball and then stroked a bases-loaded single in the twelfth inning giving Rugby the 14-13 win. Rugby was probably overextended from their extra inning win, so in the overall championship game Mayville easily dispatched the Class A winners 17-3.

The early rounds of the 1985 Class A tournament featured two near no-hitters. Enderlin's Lyle Halverson's bid was broken up in the seventh and he finished with a one-hitter in a 15-0 win over Watford City. Kyle Frappier of Carrington was one strike away from his possible no-hitter. A Fairview batter singled with two outs and two strikes in the seventh inning of a 17-0

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<sup>9</sup> *Jamestown Sun*, August 24, 1984

Carrington win. After Beach eliminated defending champion Rugby, Carrington and Enderlin worked their way through the A bracket – Carrington needing an eight-run, -two-out eighth inning rally to beat Finley. Two homeruns by Enderlin's Roy Bartholomay in a 9-3 win over Kulm put them in the championship game. In the Class A final, Enderlin took a 5-0 lead after five innings behind the pitching of their ace Halverson, but Carrington rallied for ten runs in the final three innings to win 10-5.

The Jamestown Merchants entered the AA tournament with a record of just 4-10 on the season but they smacked four homers in a 17-2 opening round win over the Grand Forks Air Base and it took an outstanding pitching performance to eliminate them in round two. They scored three first inning runs against NDSU Sportland, whose roster was mainly NDSU Bison players. At that point NDSU's Tom Stock came on in relief and over the next 7 2/3 innings surrendered just one hit while striking out 17 as Sportland rallied to beat the Merchants 11-6.

Last year's AA runner-up Jamestown Elks came into the state tournament with a record of 27-5 and had a powerful lineup led by Bob Piatz's .435 season batting average. They reached the title game with wins over Wahpeton-Breckenridge and Devils Lake to earn a rematch with last year's champs, the Mayville Red Caps, in the title game. The Elks held a 4-1 lead in the fourth inning when Mayville's Dave Gurbada reached second base. The next batter, Bill Koering, hit a long blast to deep center field that the Elks Bubba Schweigert scaled the fence to bring down to rob Koering of a home run. Schweigert then threw to second to double up Gurbada. Had the drive cleared the fence, the Elks' lead would have been cut to 4-3, but the catch seemed to change the momentum in favor of the Elks as they smashed six homers, two each by Schweigert, Scott Radloff, and catcher Dave Monson, and cruised to a 17-1 win. The overall title game was a little anti-climactic after two exciting championship games. Mark Fleischer tossed seven shutout innings and the Elks easily beat Carrington 11-2

The *Jamestown Sun* theorized that it might have been a different brand of baseball being used, or a better hitting background in centerfield, or possibly that pitchers, in an attempt to strike out more batters, were throwing more fastballs. Whatever the reason, the 1986 tournament was all about offense, particularly homeruns. Eighty-two homers were hit during the tournament and Finley and Langdon combined to hit nine round-trippers in a Class A matchup. Eventual champions NDSU Sportland scored seventy-one runs on seventy-five hits, including a dozen homers, in their four tournament games. Seven different players hit two homers in a game; Mayville's Doug Borowicz did it twice, Paul Kvilson of Finley hit three on one game, and Sportland's Tom Stock hit four while in Jamestown.

Mayville showed no lingering effects from their one-sided loss to the Jamestown Elks in the 1985 Class A title game by downing the Bismarck Senators 14-0 in the opener of the 1986 tournament. Dave Gurbada and Bill Koering combining on a seven-inning no-hitter. Four of the first five Red Cap batters to come to bat homered as they beat the Grand Forks Elks 11-4 in the quarterfinals. They then beat the Jamestown Goodroad Sports Merchants in the semifinals to

earn another trip to the Class AA title game. Meanwhile, Fargo NDSU Sportland beat the Grand Forks Air Base and crushed a very good Jamestown Elks team 20-2 to reach the final. In the title game, Mayville scored eight runs in the fifth inning and five more in the ninth but even that wasn't enough to beat Sportland as NDSU won 19-17.

Runs were just as plentiful in the Class A bracket with games ending in scores of 18-17, 16-10, 14-13, and 11-10. Tolna used pitching in the early games (a shutout by Cory Anderson) and offense in the later rounds to claim the Class A championship. Brian Luehring had five hits in an 8-5 win over Lansford in the semifinals and first inning homers by Anderson and Mark Sand in a 7-6 win over Finley in the title game. In the overall championship game, NDSU Sportland overwhelmed Tolna 22-1.

For the first time in several years, the tournament was also successful from a financial standpoint. The *Jamestown Sun* rarely provided any detailed figures, but tournament director Jack Brown estimated it took between \$10,000 and \$12,000 to put on the event. 1986 revenues included \$4,000 in advance ticket sales and \$2,400 in team entry fees, but additional gate receipts were always an unknown, dependent on whether local Jamestown teams were still alive to play during the final weekend and if rainouts caused games to be rescheduled. A check for \$2,000 from an anonymous donor meant this year's tournament finished in the red.