

# SPORTS

## SOLID SUMMER SEASONS

### Jackson, Windom, Luverne, Pipestone, Hadley off to solid amateur baseball starts at Fourth of July measurement

By Doug Wolter  
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**Jackson**

At the Fourth of July break, when the corn crop is supposed to be knee-high, some area amateur baseball teams are measuring up while others are being put to the test.

There's still a lot of baseball to be played, but in Jackson, head coach Scott Bahr has his own measuring dates. The Bulls divide each season into thirds — the first third is complete, the second third begins this weekend, and the final piece is the playoff season.

In 2018, the Bulls qualified for the amateur state tournament. Will they get back again this summer?

"We're not playing at a state-caliber level right now. We're still going to try. We weren't last year, either. We started out 2-10 and got hot later," said Bahr this week.

Indeed. From watching the way Jackson played early last year, Bahr said that a lot of rivals were surprised at the Bulls' excellence later. Fact is, he said, the Bulls surprised themselves, too.

At the moment, Jackson sports a 12-6 overall record, which includes a 9-5 record in the First Nite League.

That's a pretty good mark, but Bahr said inconsistency tied to some missing and injured players, and a lack of consistent scoring, has kept the team from breaking loose. The defense has been good, however, and players have stolen 33 bases in 18 games.

One of the team leaders in 2019 is second baseman/shortstop Andy Wolf, a 40-year-old who needed 29 hits to tie Kip Wachal for most hits by a Bulls player in a career. He is only four away from the record, and he's hitting .403 with a .589 on-base percentage.

Blaise Jacobsen, another veteran, is 41 and still receives the ball well at catcher. He's hitting .378.

Ryan Rasche has a .340 batting average while Shad Wacker and Chris Gumto are both at the .300 mark.

Starting pitchers Rasche and Ben Scheevel are solid. Rasche has a 3-2 win-loss record and a 0.53 ERA. Scheevel is at 2-1 and 1.54.

**Pirates led by pitching**

Like the Bulls, the Windom Pirates are hoping for a return trip to the state tourney. If they get there,

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Photos by Tim Middagh / The Globe

**Above:** Lakefield Horned Frogs player Ryan Christopher tries to stay cool during a Sunday night amateur baseball game held in 98-degree heat. **Below:** Luverne catcher Declan Beers moves in as Lakefield's Phil Pronk (9) slides into home plate in a Sunday amateur baseball contest. Redbirds pitcher Andrew DeBoer and Frogs right fielder Kyle Gruhlke (5) watch the play unfold.



## Cubs' team leader Wasmund playing final season

By Doug Wolter  
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WORTHINGTON — When Josh Wasmund retires at the end of the 2019 amateur baseball season, chances are that the Worthington Cubs will simply move on. Nothing remains forever, especially in the amateur ranks. Turnover happens yearly on the teams, and every season means a new start and a fresh dose of optimism. Players come, players go.

Years ago, however, it would have been difficult to imagine a summer season without the

longtime Cub being a part of it. Wasmund, 37, has been a team leader for many years, and the idea that he'll walk away later this summer sounds somewhat like the end of an era.

His initial year with the Cubs was 2002, after he'd finished his first year at Minnesota West Community and Technical College. The team had about five really good players then, remembers Wasmund, and most of the rest came on board just to complete the squad. There have been lean years, and a couple of times since then the team dis-

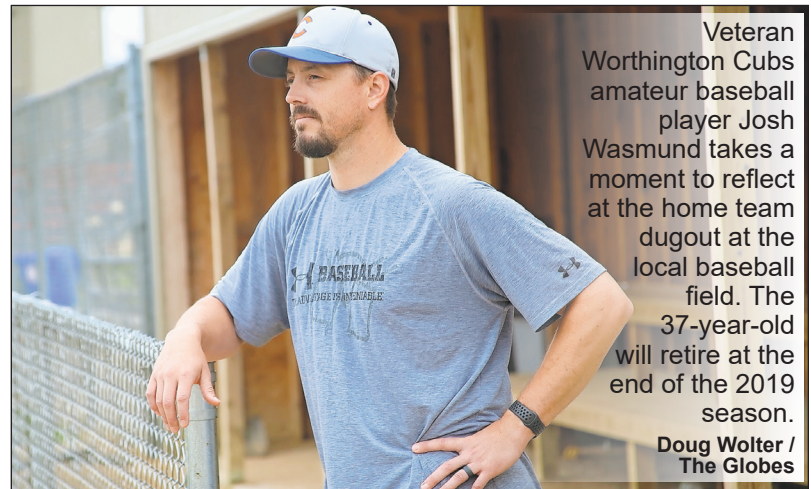
banded, only to come together again.

This year's Cubs have lost 11 straight games to start the season. But only three years ago, in 2016, they qualified for the Minnesota Class C amateur state tournament. They won 19 of their first 20 contests.

"That was the best team I ever played on," Wasmund said this week as he looked back on his career.

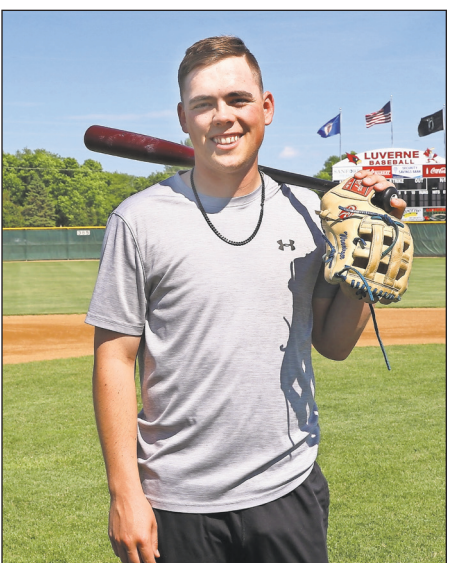
The slugging first baseman compiled 17 years in an amateur

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Veteran Worthington Cubs amateur baseball player Josh Wasmund takes a moment to reflect at the home team dugout at the local baseball field. The 37-year-old will retire at the end of the 2019 season.

Doug Wolter / The Globes



Tim Middagh / The Globe

Skyler Wenninger was a success at high school and college baseball. Today an amateur player with Luverne, he comes off a spring season where he helped the Worthington Trojans softball team with their hitting skills.

## Wenninger coaches softball, excels at baseball

By Doug Wolter  
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LUVERNE — Skyler Wenninger was an excellent high school baseball player, but that does not guarantee success at the next level. When he made the jump into college ball, there were those who questioned whether he would make the grade.

They needn't have worried. First of all, Skyler had an excellent baseball teacher at Luverne High School — his father, Mike. Secondly, young Wenninger already knew how to put in the time and effort to improve at the sport.

He played one season at Minnesota-Duluth, where he was named the team's 2014 Rookie of the Year. He then



made the jump to South Dakota State University — where his father once played — and continued to go to work to get better.

"I started three years there at SDSU," he recalled recently. "I was pretty proud of that. The hard work paid off."

Since then, young Wenninger has continued his summer activity of playing baseball with the Luverne Redbirds amateur team. In the spring of this year, he went to work again to improve his game, as an assistant coach with the

Worthington High School varsity girls fast-pitch softball squad.

Transferring his baseball knowledge to softball concerned him, at first. He wasn't sure he was the right person for it, but with encouragement from another assistant coach with the team, Brad Grimmus, he pushed his chips all in. He became instrumental in helping the Trojans improve their hitting skills — teaching them, through drills, how to shift their weight in order to hit pitches with more authority.

The Globe sports department interviewed and took video footage of Skyler Wenninger for The Drill recently. You can see the video online at www.

dglobe.com. Here's a sampling of the interview:

**QUESTION:** What were some of the challenges you had to face making the move from high school baseball to the college game?

**ANSWER:** "High school pitching is no more than 80 miles per hour, to college at 90-92 miles per hour. A little bit of an adjustment, an eye-opening thing. Everyone is just as good as you are."

**QUESTION:** So in the spring you coached high school girls in fast-pitch softball. What was that like?

**ANSWER:** "Softball is like baseball, but it's also very different. There were a lot of

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Skyler Wenninger  
Luverne Amateur Baseball

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