



by Tom Coombe
Echo editor

Baseball, Ely and summer evenings have been intertwined for generations. That may now seem matter-of-fact, given the beauty of Veterans Memorial Field and the community’s penchant for hosting baseball tournaments year after year, even in 2020 amid the coronavirus pandemic. But it wasn’t always that way, and the ballpark today bears little resemblance to its beginnings in the mid-1950s. Then Matty Stukel came along. While Matty had a lot of help along the way, nobody can deny that he was the driving force in putting Ely’s summer baseball program on the map. “One thing led to the next,” remembered Jim Stukel, a 1970 Ely graduate and former player, coach, and ultimately head groundskeeper at the historic ballpark. “Matty’s whole goal with the thing was that he was really tired of Ely getting beat up. Not necessarily in baseball, as we did OK, but he didn’t like the politics. You would go someplace and get unfavorable umpiring, and you went to somebody’s field and the third base line was chalked left of third base. That was common. He was very determined that Legion baseball, and backing it up to Little League baseball, would really get rolling and we would make a program for Ely.” There was an Ely Little League team or two that made deep runs in the Little League playoffs in the late-1950s, but Stukel’s labor begun to bear fruit in the ensuing decades. That’s when Ely piled up district championships and state tournament appearances in both VFW and Legion baseball and even captured a state title along the way. There were Stukels and Somrocks, Dunstans and Klobuchars, Berrinis and Merhars and Erzars in the lineups. The late-1960s brought a flamethrower named Paul Starkovich, who eventually played in both the Orioles and Royals organizations and remains an Ely resident today. The ballpark progressed with the program and the 1970s brought Matty Stukel’s quest to a new level. First came a second fence that reduced the size of a cavernous outfield, while an electric scoreboard replaced a hand operated one atop the third base dugout. Soon came lights, atop giant

wooden poles that were placed around the field. There was a method to the madness. “Matty thought we could do things in Ely as well or better than anybody else, so he thought why not do tournaments here?” remembered Jim. Area and district playoffs soon became staples of Ely summers, and Matty secured both the 1975 and 1977 state Legion tournaments. In those days, a wooden grandstand served as seating inside the park and for big games there often seemed to be as many people outside the fence than inside, watching from their cars or the backs of their pickups or standing along the fence-line. It wasn’t uncommon for Matty Stukel to send a young man or two with a coffee can to collect gate admission. “They were happy to pay,” said Jim. “They just said this is where we want to sit and watch the game.” Not long after the ‘77 tourney, he concocted the grandest and what at the time seemed the most farfetched plan of them all: a bid for the Legion World Series. With the late Leonard Zupancich and ample supplies of Zup’s polish and wild rice, the two boarded a plane for Indianapolis, Ind., where they somehow convinced the nation’s Legion bigwigs to hold their signature event in the tiny town of Ely. “Matty wanted the World Series and they said why don’t you take a regional first, but he said ‘here’s our bid book,’” Jim recalled. “Here’s what we have, and pretty soon after eating enough polish those guys said ‘these guys have it together.’” The stories of the 1980 Legion World Series are legendary and truly once-in-a-lifetime. There were appearances by hall-of-famers Ted Williams and Bob Feller and an Olympic hero named Bruce Jenner. Few who were there will forget the sight of Secret Service agents on top of the stadium grandstand and then Vice President Walter Mondale on the field to throw out the ceremonial first pitch. Future big leaguers including Will Clark, Sid Fernandez, John Cangelosi and Bob Melvin were on the field and Fernandez’s Honolulu team beat Boyertown, Penn., in a classic Labor Day championship game. Matty Stukel needed an army of volunteers to pull this off and among them

were Carlo Berrini, who seemed to live in the stadium ticket booth, and Bill and Gen Palo, who ran a concession operation that included the main concession stand that exists today as well as auxiliary operations in what is now an equipment shed as well as another stand beyond the right field fence. A few years after his crowning achievement, Matty Stukel dialed back from his involvement in baseball, which also included a stint as the state’s Legion baseball director. Not long before Matty’s passing in the early-2000s, city father recognized all that he had done and aptly renamed the stretch of Seventh Avenue next to the ballpark as Stukel Way. While Matty is gone, the infrastructure he was responsible for remained and baseball continues to be a giant part of every Ely summer. Over the last 20 years or so, Matty’s legacy has carried on with Ely hosting six more state tournaments, a couple of multi-state Legion regionals, and countless other weekend regular season and district tournaments. In a typical year, anywhere from 130-150 games will be played in Ely. Improvements have also followed, with the stadium roof refurbished and the grandstand repainted, new lights installed in 2003, a scoreboard in 2015 and a \$50,000-plus initiative last year that included new netting and a blacktopped pavilion area, complete with high-top tables. Every year, teams from around the state flock to Ely and Stukel Way. “He would really be impressed knowing that he had a little bit of a hand in this,” Jim Stukel said Wednesday. “It’s incredible what has been done and how you’ve improved it.” There seemed to be nothing but good feelings last weekend, with the Sir G’s Classic bringing 10 teams and incredible baseball weather. Perhaps because of the weather, perhaps because of nostalgia or perhaps because the virus has limited what one can do, crowds were up remarkably and concession stand business was brisk for the tournament. It also wasn’t hard to find links to Ely’s baseball past.

Carlo Berrini’s grandson Brian was among the many volunteers who worked a concession shift. Down the third base line, outside the fence, people assembled to watch the game like they did back during the 1970s and 1980s. Bill and Gen Palo walked up from their home just down White Street to see the action, four decades after they were so heavily involved in the World Series. The night games both Friday and Saturday no doubt added to the connection as calling balls and strikes was Andy Stukel. Matty’s grandson and Jim’s eldest son, Andy played on the field for Duluth Central and not long after got into umpiring. He has worked countless tournaments in Ely but took a brief hiatus, missing a handful of summers as he pursued his goal of becoming a professional umpire and working in the minor leagues. Andy is now back home in Duluth, but baseball, umpiring and the Ely ballpark remain in his blood. Returning to umpire in Ely tournaments remains part of his summer itinerary. “He’s had some great umpiring experiences, but I don’t think he enjoys anything more than going to Ely to umpire,” said Jim. “He feels it. He senses something. That’s something my friend John Sandstrom said to me, just think what Matty would think now. He would be so proud.” Local baseball has truly been the only game in town this summer. Mother Nature has cooperated and there’s plenty of room to spread out, or even to watch from outside the fence in the manner of Ely baseball fans from decades before. Over the next few weeks, there will be more games, tournaments and a salute to veterans, and further ties that bind generations. The past and present come together at Veterans Memorial Field like nowhere else in Ely. Matty Stukel’s legacy has carried on and continues even in the strangest of summers. Jim Stukel will make his own pilgrimage yet this year, watching his son work behind the plate and returning to a place “that opens up a flood of memories.” “It’s a good feeling to come to Ely and watch a baseball game,” he said.

Ely Juniors down Deer River, 11-1

by Tom Coombe
It was an easy night for the home team Monday at Veterans Memorial Field. Backed by the pitching of Sammy Prijatel and runs in every inning, Ely’s age 14-and-under squad downed Deer River 11-1 in a five-inning Iron Range Baseball matchup at Veterans Memorial Field. It was the third win of the summer for Ely, and the home team cruised. Prijatel went the distance

allowing only two hits while striking out three and giving up a single run in the second inning. The hosts, meanwhile, had plenty of offense. Deegan Richards, who finished with two hits and two runs scored, doubled in the bottom of the first and scored on a Drew Marolt single. Ely broke the tie in the bottom of the second, with Brayden Mosher reaching base on an error and coming

around to score on a wild pitch. Prijatel and Richards both scored in the inning to make it 4-1. A Mosher single plated a run in the third and another run was unearned to extend Ely’s margin. The fourth inning was the backbreaker, as Ely tacked on four more runs. Brecken Sandberg, Brady

Eaton, Blake Schaller and Prijatel all had hits to fuel the offense. Ben Leeson walked and scored the game-ending tally in the bottom of the fifth. Wednesday’s home twin-bill with Grand Rapids II was rained out but Ely tugged with Cook County Thursday, after deadline, and visits Greenway Monday.

New state forest maps help Minnesotans find summer fun

Eight new state forest maps from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources feature recreation highlights to help Minnesotans find their perfect adventure. The maps, in print and mobile formats, are available for Bear Island, Big Fork, Burntside, Golden Anniversary, Remer, Koochiching, Smokey Bear, and White Earth state forests. State forest maps can lead the way to summer hiking, mountain biking, birding, berry picking, horseback and ATV riding, fishing, camping and more. “Whether you prefer a wilderness canoe paddle or an ATV ride, there’s a summer state forest experience for everyone – and our new state forest maps will make the experience even better,” said Laura Duffey, state forest map coordinator. Here are just a few examples of the outdoor summer fun available at state forests:

- Look up at the towering pines of the Lost 40 Scientific and Natural Area inside Big Fork State Forest.
- Canoe among the pines at the Bear Island and Burntside state forests. Nestled on the edge of the Boundary

Waters, these offer a northwoods paddling experience!

- Cruise through trees on the Blue Ox State Trail in the Koochiching State Forest. As you travel past the black spruce swamps and upland aspen stands, be on the lookout for wildlife, including beavers, bobcats, eagles, moose and wolves.

Users have two ways to get the new maps:

- The free Avenza App provides access to Minnesota state forest maps. Before you go. Download the app and navigate to the desired map by searching MNDNR + state forest name in their store. Never get lost in the woods. Your phone’s GPS will allow you to see your location, track distance and more.
- Fresh, redesigned paper maps with site-specific details are available from the DNR Info Center / 888-646-6367. A PDF version of the paper map can also be downloaded and printed from the state forest webpage.

In addition to the maps for these eight forests, the DNR has recently updated maps for an additional 23 state forests. See the growing list of state forests with updated maps.

Township Firefighter Applications Wanted

Anyone 18-years-old or older interested in becoming a township Firefighter: Morse/Fall Lake Fire Department is now accepting applications. Mail letter of interest to P.O. Box 660, Ely, MN and we will send you an application or you can pick one up at the Ely Echo, 15 E Chapman St., Ely.

OFFICE OF THE MINNESOTA SECRETARY OF STATE
CERTIFICATE OF ASSUMED NAME
Minnesota Statutes Chapter 333
The filing of an assumed name does not provide a user with exclusive rights to that name. The filing is required for consumer protection in order to enable customers to be able to identify the true owner of a business.

1. List the exact assumed name under which the business is or will be conducted: Fir Tree Service
2. Principal Place of Business: 22 Fir Circle, Babbitt MN 55706
3. List the name and complete street address of all persons conducting business under the above Assumed Name, OR, if an entity, provide the legal corporate, LLC, or Limited Partnership name and registered

office address: Erik Schmadeke, 22 Fir Circle, Babbitt MN 55706.
4. I, the undersigned, certify that I am signing this document as the person whose signature is required, or as agent of the person(s) whose signature would be required who has authorized me to sign this document on his/her behalf, or in both capacities. I further certify that I have completed all required fields, and that the information in this document is true and correct and in compliance with the applicable chapter of Minnesota Statutes. I understand that by signing this document I am subject to the penalties of perjury as set forth in Section 609.48 as if I had signed this document under oath.

SIGNED BY:
Erik Schmadeke
5/27/20

EE 7/4, 11

GRAND RE-OPENING

SATURDAY JULY 18 1-3 PM

NOTICE OF FILING DATES FOR ELECTION TO THE ELY SCHOOL BOARD

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO.696 ELY PUBLIC SCHOOLS STATE OF MINNESOTA

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the period for filing affidavits of candidacy for the office of school board member of Independent School District No. 696 shall begin on July 28, 2020, and shall close at 5:00 o'clock p.m. on August 11, 2020.

The general election shall be held on Tuesday, November 3, 2020. At that election, three (3) members will be elected to the School Board for terms of four (4) years each.

Affidavits of Candidacy are available by calling the District Office at 218-365-6166 ext. 1727, emailing mwognum@ely.k12.mn.us. or by downloading the form from the school website (www.ely.k12.mn.us) or Secretary of State website (www.sos.state.mn.us/media/1027/affidavit-of-candidacy.pdf).

The filing fee for this office is \$2. A candidate for this office must be an eligible voter, must be 21 years of age or more on assuming office, must have been a resident of the school district from which the candidate seeks election for thirty (30) days before the general election, and must have no other affidavit on file for any other office at the same primary or next ensuing general election.

The affidavits of candidacy must be filed in the office of the school district clerk and the filing fee paid prior to 5:00 o'clock p.m. on August 11, 2020.

Ely Echo
July 18, July 25, August 1, August 8

This Week's Sports Schedule

SENIOR BABE RUTH (LEGION) BASEBALL

Saturday
Ely at Hermantown, 6 p.m.

Tuesday
Aurora at Ely, 7:15 p.m.

Thursday
Cook County at Ely, 7:15 p.m.

Friday
Ely Baseball Blueberry Bash
Opponent to be determined vs. Ely, 7:30 p.m.

VFW BASEBALL

Monday
Proctor at Ely (2), 5 p.m.

Thursday
Cook County at Ely, 5 p.m.

JUNIOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

Monday
Ely at Greenway, 5 p.m.

Wednesday
Int. Falls at Ely, 5 p.m.

SLOWPITCH SOFTBALL

Monday
Anderson/Nickerson vs. Hardware Hank, 6 p.m., Field 4

Zup's vs. Buzz/Heavy Metal, 6 p.m., Field 3

Lakeshore Liquor vs. Low Impact Excavators, 6 p.m., Field 1

Low Impact Excavators vs. Anderson/

Nickerson, 7 p.m., Field 4

Buzz/Heavy Metal vs. Lakeshore Liquor, 7 p.m., Field 3

Hardware Hank vs Zup's, 7 p.m., Field 1