

SPORTS

Send your scores and story ideas to sports editor Martin Schlegel

If you've attended a high school game, please share photos to mschlegel@orourkemediagroup.com



CROSS-COUNTRY

Freier, Hanson enjoy STATE EXPERIENCE

Look to improve for next year

BY MARTIN SCHLEGEL
Sports Editor

Two runners represented Red Wing at the state cross country meet Saturday, Nov. 6, at St. Olaf College in Northfield. Eighth grader Nora Hanson finished in the top-20 while Aaron Freier earned 56th place.

The common consensus though, it was too hot.

Unseasonably warmer than average, both runners mentioned the heat being a factor. Already having to deal with hills on the challenging course, the warmer weather made it tougher. Temperatures reached the mid-60s by the late afternoon during the Class AA girls race.

Most would consider sunny and 65 in November a great day to be outside, but for the runners not so much. They've likely trained for cooler weather and having raced the previous week in the chilling rain, the conditions Saturday felt much hotter.

The Class AA boys ran first, and Freier crossed the finish line in 17 minutes, 33.7 seconds. He said after the race he felt great but was really pushing for a time under 17 minutes. His goals for the season, however, have been achieved. Qualifying and running at state was something Freier said he's been waiting and working for.

At the Section 1AA race, Freier knew with about a half mile to go, he was going to qualify for state. He ran alongside Issac Feldamp of Waseca for second place but allowed himself to enjoy the moment as he coasted to the finish line.

"It's been my goal this year and in the long run the last two years. I told myself I wanted to make state as a junior," he said. "I made it, and it feels really good."

His other goal of finishing a race in under 17 minutes didn't happen though. Freier admitted he wasn't neces-

sarily content with his performance but felt he could build off it next season.

In the girls race, Hanson burst into 20th place with a little extra hustle as she came across the finish line in 19:33.82.

Hanson concluded what has been an excellent season for herself competing in her first state meet.

"My goal was to get under 19 (minutes), I was super close last race but next year I'm going to work really hard and push myself even more," Hanson said. "I thought I did pretty good this season."

Hanson warmed up, mostly alone, before the race as most individual qualifiers do. Being by herself felt different without her teammates. Yet looking around at the other competitors then going out and racing against them was a great experience.

"It's fun though because you get to compete against yourself and other people who are faster than you," Hanson said. "It just pushes you."

Each of the Winger runners already are looking ahead to next season's state meet. Hanson wants to reach the podium, saying she feels she needs to train for the heat and "definitely the hills."

"I'm just going to try to push myself way harder so I get up to that first pack next year because I'm planning on coming back to state," she said.

For Freier, he'd like to finish at least in the top 20, preferably the top 10 next year. He believes the Wingers have the potential to join him in the boys race.

"We're not too far off. We got fifth place at sections," Freier said. "I don't think state as a team is that far off for us if we really want it."

Readers can reach Martin Schlegel at mschlegel@orourkemediagroup.com.



MARTIN SCHLEGEL / O'ROURKE MEDIA GROUP PHOTOS

Above: Red Wing junior Aaron Freier ran the Class AA state cross country boys race at St. Olaf in Northfield on Saturday in 17 minutes, 33.7 seconds. Freier came across the finish in 56th place. Below: Nora Hanson of Red Wing (left) pushes toward the finish line to earn 20th place at the Class AA cross country girls race at St. Olaf in Northfield on Saturday. She finished with a time of 19 minutes, 33.82 seconds.

CROSS-COUNTRY

Lake City girls earn eighth at state

Anderson finishes top-50

BY MARTIN SCHLEGEL
Sports Editor

Lake City had three girls run in the top-50 in the Class A state cross-country meet Saturday, Nov. 4, at St. Olaf in Northfield. Reese Anderson finished in the top 50 as the lone Lake City runner in the boys race.

Head coach Howie Cook was pleased with the results given the amount of injuries so many of the runners were dealing with.

Anderson ran with a foot injury and still the senior finished in 43rd, running the race in 17 minutes, 26.49 seconds. Junior Jacey Majerus had nagging hip soreness all season and freshman Peyton Meincke had

respiratory issues.

Cook said it could sound negative but given the circumstances to finish where the runners did was "something special" to say the least.

"As one of 180-plus schools that start, we're one of the 16 left and eighth best in the state. I'll take that any day rather than being at home," Cook said. "We ended up in the top half as a team. I'm happy with that."

Seventh grader Olivia Yotter led the Tigers with a 29th-place finish (20:11.44). Meincke came in 40th (20:26.95), and Majerus finished in 43rd (20:28.96).

Cook said Yotter emerged as one of the best runners on the



MARTIN SCHLEGEL / O'ROURKE MEDIA GROUP PHOTOS

Left: Lake City's Olivia Yotter (right) led the Tigers, coming in 29th place at the Class A state cross country meet at St. Olaf in Northfield on Saturday. Right: Zumbrota-Mazeppa's Natasha Sortland finished in fourth place at the Class A state cross country meet at St. Olaf in Northfield on Saturday.

team. It gave the Tigers a formidable top-3.

"Last year, we were fifth in the section and

that was disappointing. This year we had three very good front runners," Cook said. "The

next three have been picking up the last meets to win us the conference and win us the section.

Here, there is nobody weak."

See- State Page A12

VOLLEYBALL

Z-M season ends with section final loss

BY MARTIN SCHLEGEL
Sports Editor

Cannon Falls won a close first set and it appeared the two teams would slug it out the rest of the way. Instead, the Bombers blocked extremely well as Madison Burr and Halle Hustad took over the match.

The No. 1 Bombers avenged a five-set loss to Zumbrota-Mazeppa with a 25-23, 25-9, 25-13 sweep of the No. 2 Cougars in the Section 1AA final on Saturday at the Mayo Civic Center.

In total, the Bombers ended with 20 blocks. Hustad and Burr combined for 12 blocks and 28 kills, three more kills than the Cougars.

Rylee Nelson ended the match with 10 assists, seven digs, seven kills and three aces for the Cougars. Torey Stencil had 13 assists and four digs. Natalie Dykes recorded four kills, three blocks and two digs, while Lilly Mehrkens added five kills.

Z-M ended the season 25-7 overall.

Readers can reach Martin Schlegel at mschlegel@oro-urkemediagroup.com.



Lilly Mehrkens of Zumbrota-Mazeppa stretches to hit a ball past the Cannon Falls block in the Section 1AA final on Nov. 5 at Mayo Civic Center in Rochester.



Zumbrota-Mazeppa's Lola Wagner receives a ball in the Section 1AA final on Nov. 5 at Mayo Civic Center in Rochester.



ADDIE VOXLAND / O'ROURKE MEDIA GROUP
Addie Voxland of Zumbrota-Mazeppa serves a ball in the Section 1AA final on Nov. 5 at Mayo Civic Center in Rochester.

SPORTS CALENDAR

SATURDAY, NOV. 13

Girls Hockey: Red Wing at Hastings, 3:30 p.m.

MONDAY, NOV. 15

Girls Basketball: Elmwood-Plum City at Pepin-Alma (scrimmage), 5 p.m.

TUESDAY, NOV. 16

Girls Basketball: Mondovi at Ellsworth, 7 p.m.

THURSDAY, NOV. 18

Girls Swimming: Class A State Meet (diving prelims), 12 p.m.

Girls Basketball: New Richmond at Ellsworth, 7 p.m.

Girls Hockey: Albert Lea at Red Wing, 7:15 p.m.

FRIDAY, NOV. 19

Girls Swimming: Class A State Meet (swimming prelims), 12 p.m.

Boys Basketball: Lincoln at Elmwood-Plum City (scrimmage), 6:30 p.m.

Girls Basketball: Eleva-Strum at Elmwood-Plum City, 7:15 p.m.

SATURDAY, NOV. 20

Girls Basketball: Red Wing, Goodhue at Kasson-Mantorville (scrimmage), 8 a.m.

Lake City at Austin (scrimmage), 10 a.m.

Girls Swimming: Class A State Meet (finals), 12 p.m.

Boys Hockey: Red Wing hosting scrimmage, 2:15 p.m.

Girls Hockey: Fergus Falls at Red Wing, 12 p.m.

Dates, times and locations subject to change

FOOTBALL



SUBMITTED PHOTOS
Seth Morem (bottom, left) said he was able to make lasting memories with his friends and girlfriend that he'll cherish forever.



Seth Morem brought up how much he was able to just enjoy being in the moment and enjoying nature.

Morem travels the country

Red Wing graduate spends gap year in RV

BY MARTIN SCHLEGEL
Sports Editor

You have the chance to study abroad and the trip is going well. The places you visit along with the classes and professors are fantastic. Yet, halfway through the spectacular time there, the program sends you home due to COVID-19.

Plenty of students experienced this and wondered what to do next. For St. John's defensive end and traveling enthusiast Seth Morem, the next move was to go to Rochester and purchase an RV.

While studying abroad in London, the Red Wing graduate was just two days into the second portion of his time there. Due to rapidly growing COVID-19 cases, the program decided to send the students home.

He was devastated. Getting the opportunity to travel the world and see new places was a big dream of his.

During the summer after coming home, he learned there would be no football season and all classes would be online. Morem thought he had the perfect chance to go exploring.

"We're going to be all online, there's no football," Morem said. "I'm still going to be able to see all my buddies, but I really wanted to make the

decision to drive around the country. Especially with gas prices being that low at the time. It wasn't going to be a huge dent (in my bank account)."

Morem traveled to many national parks in the country, some planned and some on whim.

He had his phone to use maps, stay connected with friends and family. He needed to look up what to do once they got to certain destinations. Once there though, he only used his phone for pictures.

Not necessarily a complete unplugging, but one of sorts that allowed him and his fellow travelers to enjoy the beauty of the parks.

"I booked all of our RV spots. But in terms of planning our day-to-day activities, it was just what we were feeling at the time," Morem said. "Our main goal for the first trip was to hit as many national parks and areas that we could. I left the last fourth of our trip to just throw it up in the air."

One that stood out was Angels Landing at Zion National Park. Morem said he highly recommended it to friends, and they agreed with him when he described it as "my favorite place on earth."

Morem wishes he could have gotten the full experience in his study abroad program in London. To

make up for it, he has plans to go with his family four days after his upcoming graduation.

"One positive thing is we're going back in May once I graduate," he said. "Thankfully, I'm going back and getting that second half back."

Best traveling tips

When asked how difficult it was to drive the RV, something Morem hadn't done before, he didn't need much time to acclimate to it. However, he did point out that "not everyone is so Minnesota-nice on the road."

He provided other travel tips should anyone want to do something similar.

First, there's no need to rush.

"It wasn't smooth sailing all the time, but definitely living in the moment was something I'd advise people to do," he said.

Make new friends. At least meet new people. Morem described meeting a couple from California that "radiated such positivity" among others he met along the way.

"I made a lot of great relationships on my travels," Morem said. "Even now I wish I would have talked to a lot more people because when you're on the road meeting other travelers, they're one of the kindest people you'll

ever meet."

Morem recommends utilizing the national parks system. He said others heard about his travels and began doing some of their own. They told him they wouldn't have thought of it or felt motivated to do it until they heard of his travels.

"It's awesome to inspire people to branch out and do their own thing," Morem said.

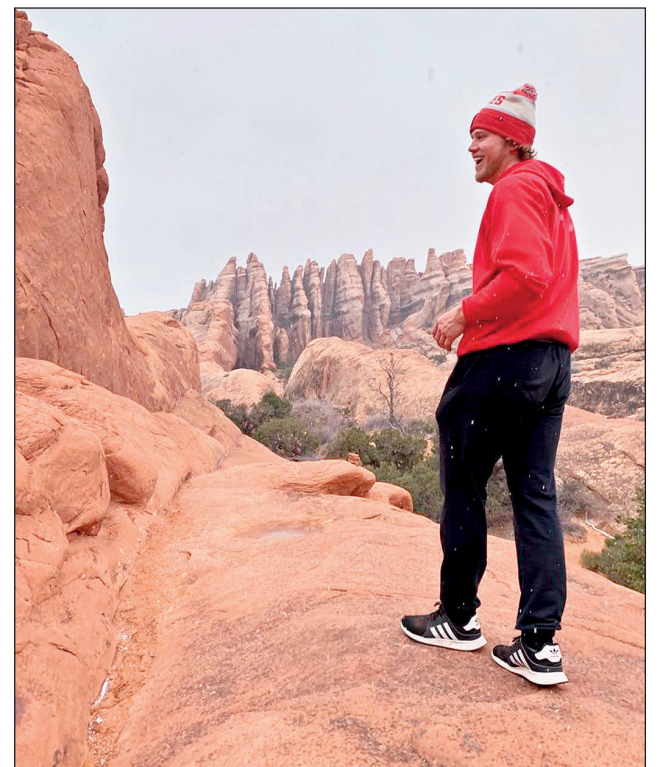
Another thing Morem recommends is getting out of your comfort zone. Meeting new people can be difficult, but it's worth it to do so. He never went snowboarding before his trips. It turned out to be one of his favorite activities.

Morem's last piece of advice is to "cherish the memories you have with people closest to you."

Finding success on the field

In all his travels, he remained incredibly active but did no football activities. He played basketball, soccer, hiked and snowboarded. He gained back the pounds in fall camp he lost during his year of traveling.

Feeling refreshed and more than ready to get back on the football field for his last season at St. John's, Morem is having a career year. He is the



Red Wing's Seth Morem (pictured) took a year to explore the national parks after being sent home from his study abroad in London.

current leader in sacks (7.5) and tied for first in tackles for loss (12.5) in the conference.

He's helped lead a defense that had three consecutive shutouts and four total this season. The Johnnies are scheduled to face Bethel for the MIAC conference championship. The Johnnies are undefeated (9-0) and ranked fourth in the nation this season.

"My whole plan for

taking a gap year was to eventually come back and play football," Morem said. "I was wondering if I was going to be completely rusty on this. Am I going to be where I was at two years ago? Once I got to fall camp it all just came back. Thankfully I've been having a very good season."

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LETTER OF INTENT



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Red Wing's Andrew Ball signed his letter of Intent to play baseball for Augustana. He was joined by his parents, Chris and Sarah, and Activities Director Paul Hartmann.

'I can't wait to play for Augie'

Ball signs with Augustana

BY MARTIN SCHLEGEL

Sports Editor

Wednesday was a big day for Andrew Ball. He'd been working hard to get the attention of college coaches and finally found the perfect fit. On Wednesday, the Red Wing senior signed his letter of intent to play baseball for Augustana.

Ball said he wouldn't have gotten to this point without working hard in the weight room and adjusting his skill set as he got older.

In middle school, Ball was on the top level team, Triple-A, for traveling baseball, he said, because of his size and height. As time went on, others caught up to him and passed him in size and weight. No longer was the biggest kid on the team, he began to think baseball wasn't for him anymore.

"As high school hit, everyone started growing. I kind of plateaued, because I didn't really work for it and just went off what was given to me in the beginning. It showed. I made the bottom team freshman year for my travel team.

"I contemplated not playing. Next spring I went out and tried out for a different club team

along with the one I was previously on. I made both top teams and chose the one that I had been with for four years, at the time, the rest of history."

The transformation from nearly quitting baseball to signing with Augustana began in the weight room. Ball admitted he wasn't taking the strength and mechanics as seriously as he should have, but he refocused himself to commit to working out through the winter months.

It's certainly paid off. Activities director and baseball coach Paul Hartmann said from the first start in the playoffs to now, Ball has never wavered from his personal commitment to getting stronger.

"Once you make contact with a coach, it's all about the player proving themselves," Hartmann said about athletes keeping a connection alive with college coaches. "He proved himself last spring when they saw him and when they saw him multiple times this summer."

Ball said he had some interest in other locations but knew almost immediately that he wanted to go to Augustana. The campus size and community size were the two biggest factors for Ball, along with the team atmosphere and highly credible coaching staff.

Ball plans to play basketball for Red Wing again, then pitch for the baseball team. He's loved pitching and is set to continue to do so with the Vikings.

"There's something about the adrenaline rush starting on the mound," Ball said when asked why he prefers pitching. "When you have good competition you're staring down and they are staring you down. One of them has to shove it down the other person's throat."

Augustana won the Division II national championship in 2018, winning a program-best 52 games. Tim Huber enters his 14th season as head coach of the Vikings. The baseball team has found recent success, appearing in the Division II NCAA tournament three times in the last four seasons.

"I'm very excited to get started. I can't wait to play for Augie," Ball said.

Area Signees

Two Lake City athletes signed their letters of intent Wednesday morning: Natalie Bremer and Ava Brunn. Bremer signed with MSU-Mankato women's basketball, and Brunn signed to play volleyball at South Dakota School of Mines.

Readers can reach Martin Schlegel at mschlegel@orourkemediagroup.com.

STATE PAGE A10

Freshman Willa Field ran the race in 125th (22:59.12), Sophomore Natalie Gates finished in 128th (23:07.82) to round out the top 5 Tiger runners. Also running was sophomore Natalie Anderson in 134th (23:20.29), and freshman Rylee Stoltz in 138th (23:44.13).

Lake City girls came in eight place with a score of 226.

As for Anderson and his performance, he didn't run near the time he normally would. Cook said he was proud of all Anderson was able to accomplish after feeling something wrong in his foot halfway through the Hiawatha Valley League meet.

"He'll be disappointed, but I'll remind him he's a state track runner," Cook said. "He's run so well this year, how does that happen halfway through the HVL meet? He felt something in his foot. ... He didn't finish where he wanted to. He got through it, and that's pretty impressive."

Sortland recovers to finish fourth



MARTIN SCHLEGEL / O'ROURKE MEDIA GROUP

Lake City's Reese Anderson (414) earned 43rd place at the Class A state cross country meet at St. Olaf in Northfield on Saturday.

Representing Zumbrota-Mazeppa in the Class AA race, Natasha Sortland was running in one of the lead packs of runners through most of the race. On the final turn up the incline and through the final stretch, she had a sizable lead and looked to be headed for a third-place finish.

As she approached the finish line, she turned to look behind her to see how much of a lead she had. Then near 5 feet before

crossing the finish, she collapsed. The runner behind her caught up and took third. Sortland regained her strength enough to walk across the line in fourth.

She recovered in time to accept her award at the ceremony some 30 minutes after the race ended.

The Section 1AA girls' champion finished her state race in 18:50.01.

Readers can reach Martin Schlegel at mschlegel@orourkemediagroup.com.

BASEBALL

Feyereisen reflects on journey to big leagues

BY BOB BURROWS
Sports Editor

When JP Feyereisen was drafted in the 16th round by the Cleveland Indians out of NCAA Division III UW-Stevens Point in 2014, he figured he'd be happy to play a couple of seasons of minor league ball.

Six years later he made his major league debut for his home state Milwaukee Brewers at Wrigley Field. And just a month ago, he ended his first full season in the big leagues on the mound at Fenway Park, in the bottom of the ninth inning, pitching for the Tampa Bay Rays in the fourth and deciding game of the American League Division Series.

"Things didn't go my way, but I felt good out there and made some good pitches," he said about the Rays' 6-5 walk-off loss to the World Series bound Red Sox. "And it was a lot of fun."

Feyereisen was a third-team all-state pitcher as a senior at River Falls High School in 2011. He spent that summer helping both the American Legion Post 121 and River Falls Fighting Fish amateur teams win state championships.

He enrolled at UW-Stevens Point, where he continued to play baseball while majoring in physical education, with minors in health and adaptive physical education. He was named the Wisconsin Intercollegiate Athletic Association Pitcher of the Year as a sophomore in 2013, before playing for the Wisconsin Rapids Rafter of the summer collegiate Northwoods League.

Feyereisen set a Rafter's franchise record with 11 saves that season, and the following summer he was selected by the Cleveland Indians on the third and final day of the Major League Baseball draft in the 16th round—the 488th overall pick.

It was just the beginning of Feyereisen's six-year journey to the big leagues.

"When I got drafted I thought it would be really cool to make it to double-A, you know, as a 16th round draft pick I thought it'd be really cool to play a couple years in double-A. That's pretty high up in the baseball world."

It took three years for Feyereisen to reach the AA level, where he became a 2016 All-Star with the Indians' Eastern League affiliate—the Akron Rubberducks.

Soon came a trade to the New York Yankees as part of the blockbuster 2016 trade that sent all-star closer Andrew Miller to Cleveland. And Feyereisen began thinking about how cool it would be to play in the Major Leagues for such a storied franchise as the Yankees.

But that chance never came, despite continuing to prevent runs at a stellar clip in the Yankees' farm system—including three seasons at Triple-A Scranton, where he was an International League All-Star in 2019.

At the end of the 2019 season, the Brewers acquired Feyereisen from the Yankees for 17-year-old minor league infielder Brenny Escanio and international signing bonus pool money, and moved him one step closer to his big league dream.

"I was in the Yankees' AAA for three years and then finally got traded to the Brewers," he recalled. "And then that offseason I was kind of



PHOTO COURTESY OF JP FEYEREISEN

After six years in the minor leagues, River Falls' native JP Feyereisen completed his first full season in the majors in 2021. After starting the year with his home state Milwaukee Brewers, Feyereisen was traded to the Tampa Bay Rays in May and helped the team to a 100-win season and the American League East Division title.

like alright, I'm gonna pitch in the big leagues at some point in time."

After playing for the United States National Team at the 2019 World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Premier 12 Tournament in Mexico and Japan that fall, he was added to the Brewers' 40-man roster in November. He made the opening day roster for the Brewers for the COVID-19 shortened 2020 season and made his major league debut that July at the age of 27 at an empty Wrigley Field against the Chicago Cubs.

Feyereisen appeared in six games during the shortened 2020 season before rising to a prominent setup role with the Brewers in 2021, bolstered by a 17-inning scoreless streak to start the year. At one point his jersey was the third best-seller on the team behind just Christian Yelich and Josh Hader.

"I'm sure there were some people in River Falls that helped put me on that list," he said.

On May 21, he was traded by the Brewers, along with fellow reliever Drew Rasmussen, to Tampa Bay for shortstop Willy Adames and relief pitcher Trevor Richards—a trade Feyereisen said worked out well for both teams.

Adames became a key part of the Brewers National League Central Division championship team while Feyereisen bolstered arguably one of the best bullpens in the American League, posting a record of 4-2 with three saves, 12 holds and a 2.45 earned run average while helping the Rays to a 100-win season and the American League East Division title. He made a combined 56 appearances for the Brewers and Rays in his first full major league season.

Feyereisen had emerged as the Brewers' seventh-inning specialist at the beginning of the season, setting the table for all-stars Devin Williams in the eighth-inning and Josh Hader in the ninth. That all changed at Tampa, where he came out of the bullpen anywhere from the third to the ninth inning of games.

Feyereisen said it was tough to be the losing pitcher in the deciding game of the ALDS at Fenway Park three weeks ago, but he said he wasn't as nervous as he was in his major league debut at an empty Wrigley Field.

"In Wrigley, you're expecting it to be packed with Chicago Cubs fans, and obviously there was no one there," he said. "But it's kind of crazy because the playoff game at Fenway kind of felt like there was no one in the stands too. It's like you

almost have a zone you're in and you don't even realize how many people are screaming or yelling. And I felt comfortable, way more comfortable in the playoff position than I did in my debut."

As proud as Feyereisen is of the work he did on the field this season, he's equally as humble about his contributions off it. In September, he was part of Major League Baseball's partnership with the Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation to raise awareness for childhood cancer. Feyereisen asked for pledges for every strikeout he collected in September and was the Rays' top fundraiser with \$5,000 raised. The Rays Foundation matched that for a total of \$10,000 to fight childhood cancer.

"I'm just trying to basically use my position to reach as many people as possible," he said. "And it was cool that the foun-

datation told me that they were going to match it up to \$5,000 so the goal was hopefully we could get to \$5,000 and then turn into \$10,000 and it worked out, so it was awesome."

Since returning to River Falls two weeks ago Feyereisen has been catching up with family and friends. An avid outdoorsman, he's already gotten in a few fishing trips up north and is eagerly preparing for the Wisconsin deer hunting season.

"Just enjoying Wisconsin and the north woods," he said. "I'll start working out again here soon and probably head down to spring training around the middle of January. Just to get down there early so I can work out outside and throw outside and hopefully get ready for another 162 games again."

His advice to younger players?

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River Falls native back home after first full MLB season



STAR-OBSERVER FILE PHOTO

JP Feyereisen's love of baseball was exemplified when he returned to the mound with a smile and fat lip, two days after being hit in the mouth by a line drive during his junior season at River Falls High School.



BOB BURROWS / STAR-OBSERVER PHOTO

There were plenty of JP Feyereisen Milwaukee Brewers jerseys spotted around River Falls this summer. Bill Smith ordered his in early May and it arrived at his house the day before Feyereisen was traded to the Tampa Bay Rays on May 21. Smith still got Feyereisen to autograph the jersey when Feyereisen spent a few days back in River Falls during the July All-Star break.

"Play for the love of the game," he said. "Don't just do it because someone's telling you have to, or you're trying to be in the big leagues. Do it for

the love of it, and then hopefully from there on good stuff will happen."

Readers can reach Bob Burrows at bburrows@oro-urkemediagroup.com

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