

# Catcher powers Rams to big win

Considering what he accomplished on Father's Day, Michigan Lake Area Rams catcher Joe Seestadt might be a hard guy to please when he has children.

Seestadt, from Fenton and Western Michigan University, treated himself to 11 RBI in Sunday's Father's Day doubleheader split against Hines Park, Mercury at Livonia's Ford Field.

Seestadt made it a day he'll never forget when he collected nine RBI in the second game, a 19-9 five-inning mercy victory for the Rams. He went 2-for-3, scored a run and had two RBI in the first game, won by Hines Park, 8-8.

The split gave the Rams a 4-4 record in the Adray Metro Baseball Association.

Seestadt hit a grand slam in the first inning of the second game, sending him on his way to a 4-for-4 performance that also featured three singles.

Seestadt's grand slam cleared the left field fence and didn't stop until it nearly made it across the street to Silver Village, a retirement community.

"They picked up the ball on the other side of Lyndon," Rams coach Rick Berryman said.

After Seestadt, no one collected more than one hit, but there were contributors for sure.

Greg Rogers (Redford/Catholic Central/Oakland University) was 1-3 with three runs scored. Bob Hamp (Farmington Hills/Madonna) went 1-2 and scored two runs; Brian Isitt (Royal Oak/Central Michigan) scored four runs after reaching base with a single, fielder's choice, and two walks; Tom Biljan (Oakland University) went 1-4, scored a run and had three RBI.

Todd Miller (Farmington/Brother Rice/Madonna University) went 1-2 and scored three runs. Johnny Rogers (Jackson State) earned the pitching victory in three innings of work. Jason Westphal gave him relief help.

Hines Park scored six runs in the sixth inning of the first game to rally for a 9-8 victory, its first win in 10 games.

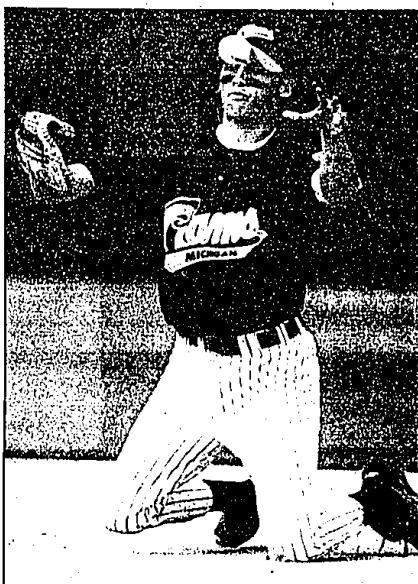
Tom Willner (Indiana University), the third of four Rams' pitchers, was tagged with the loss.

Nick Latra (Farmington/Central Michigan) was credited with the win in relief.

The Rams had plenty of offense despite the loss.

Isitt went 3-4 and scored twice. Biljan went 2-2, had two RBI and scored two runs. Rogers was 2-2 and scored a run and Hamp was 2-4 with two runs.

Dave Knight (Plymouth Salem/Detroit-Mercy) and Ryan Rumberger (Salem) each had two hits, including home runs, for Hines Park. Chris Karney



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LAMBERT

**When you get down to it: Rams first baseman Eric Pierce, a former North Farmington player, makes the difficult throw after fielding a ground ball.**

(Detroit CC/UDM) went 2-4. Berryman is excited about the Adray Metro Baseball Association, a merger of three teams from the Livonia Collegiate Baseball League and five teams from Adray Metro Baseball League.

The 20-under teams (Rams, Hines Park, Livonia Adray and Livonia Decision Consultants Inc.) are staying competitive against the unlimited aged teams (Troy Jet Box, Windsor Selects, Windsor Stars and Downriver Adray).

Through games played Sunday, Livonia DCI leads the league with a 6-3 record (12 points). The Windsor Stars are 6-4 (12), followed by Downriver Adray (5-2, 10 points); Troy Jet Box (5-1, 10); Rams (4-4, 8); Windsor Selects (3-5, 6) and Hines Park (1-9, 2).

"I'm very, very pleased," Berryman said. "It's very well balanced, and one is running away with it. You're seeing a lot of one run ballgames, low scoring. You're not playing the same teams and playing unlimited aged teams will better prepare collegiate teams for the playoffs."

Having teams from Windsor, a place with a casino and other, uh, distractions, makes the league unique.

"All I tell the players is where the next game is and drive carefully," Berryman said. "I'm their coach, not their parent."

Jet Box has been coached the last 25 years by Jim Corte, the only guy in the league who has seen as many games as the ageless Livonia Adray coach John Moraitis.

That's saying something because Moraitis is so old he was in the crowd for Babe Ruth's 714th home run.

Ironically, Berryman pitched for Corte on Jet Box's limited

age team in 1981 and '82. "He was heavier than he is now," Corte said. "He had a belly."

"I still got my old Jet Box jacket at downtown," Berryman said.

Corte's oldest player is 37-year-old Mark Jacob, a former Tigers' farm hand who has allowed only one earned run in four appearances.

The Rams and Jet Box will play make-up game at 5:15 p.m. today at Madonna Park in Livonia.

## Balanced Rams lineup

Isitt leads the Rams with a .476 average, one triple, one home run and two doubles. Isitt played football at Holy Cross as a freshman last fall before deciding to transfer to CMU where he will concentrate on baseball.

"Central got a 'find' in him," Berryman said. "He's a left-handed batter with speed."

Seestadt didn't have an RBI before Sunday. His 11 RBI in Sunday's double-header gives him the team lead and he raised his average to .417.

Rickey Miller (Grambling) is tied with Seestadt with a .417 average while Greg Rogers is hitting .350.

"He gets on base one way or another," Berryman said.

Biljan, hitting .269, has 10 RBI and only one strikeout 27 at-bats.

"You get a man on base and he's going to move him," Berryman said. "He's hitting in hard luck. One day he hit 1,200 feet of fly ball to center field and they were all caught."

(Assistant coach) Shawn McGowan has been working with the kids and has improved their hitting. He's the one who worked with Tom Hartley (a standout at Michigan State), so he knows what he's doing."

# Rochester wins Class A title

BY JIM TOTHI  
STAFF WRITER

There was little doubt last season and absolutely no doubt last weekend.

Rochester is the class of high school baseball in Michigan for 1997.

The Falcons put the finishing touches on an incredible eight-game tournament run Saturday by dominating yet another opponent in the Class A championship at Bailey Park in Battle Creek.

Combining the key ingredients — strong pitching, heavy hitting and solid fielding — that had them perched atop the state rankings for much of the season, the Falcons overpowered Portage Central, 8-1, to earn the school's first baseball championship.

"What a great feeling," coach Bob Dieters said after watching starter Mike Bennion fan Brian Evans for the game's final out. "This was certainly our year. You only get so many chances to get here, so you better take advantage."

Take advantage is exactly what the Falcons did to reach the title game. They took advantage of what each tourney foe had to offer, outscoring their

## BASEBALL

eight opponents 60-8.

"I never thought we could cruise through this tournament the way we did, but I did know it was going to take an awfully good team to beat us," said Dieters, whose squad finished with 38 wins in 38 games. "This is the best team I've ever seen. They've been good all year and really wanted to win it all."

As they had throughout the postseason, the Falcons jumped all over the opponent early in the game. Two hits produced two runs off Central starter Brian Elsworth in the opening inning and three hits plated three more runs in the third frame.

Nick Menzo and Justin Brewer, two of only five seniors on the 16-man roster, hammered RBI singles in the first and were instrumental again in the third by clubbing a triple and single, respectively.

Three more runs in the fifth — highlighted by a Bennion double and two-run single off the bat of junior Tim Frankhouse — put the game on ice.

All the while, Bennion was keeping the Mustangs (26-6) in

check. He limited the Mustangs, who a day earlier pounded 23 hits in their semifinal win over Hazel Park, to five hits over the first five innings before yielding an unearned run in the sixth.

"This was probably the best I threw all year; I never had a doubt," said Bennion, who finished the season 7-1. "I was pretty confident going in, because we've been playing real well."

Andrew Good recorded the win in an 11-1 semifinal drubbing of Okemos on Friday.

"It's a real tribute to Bennion," Central coach Bob Royer said. "He kept challenging us with the fastball. He threw strikes and had some better defense behind him; that was the difference."

In the win over Okemos (25-9), Good ran his season record to 12-0 by scattering four hits and one walk while fanning three in four innings. Junior Domanick Squires came on for the final two innings and didn't allow a hit.

The Falcons broke the game open with five runs in the third, knocking out Okemos starter Brad Wheeler.

Menzo drove in two with a bases-loaded double, and sophomore Brett Watten delivered the final two with a home run.

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