

# Vermont Senior Baseball News

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edited by Mike Wagner

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## Chelsea Wins Lower Division

In a well played and exciting game at Chelsea, the combined pitching of Neil Kennedy (6 innings) and Perry Parker limited Montpelier to two runs in a 3-2 victory.

Chelsea plated all of their runs in the bottom of the second on singles by Gordon Barnaby, Blake Thomsen, Ted Hatch, Perry Parker and Neil Kennedy. The Monties' solid defense and strong pitching from Bob Stanton, Brian O'Regan and Bill Perrault, shut the door on the Chelsea scoring the rest of the way.

Montpelier threatened in the 9th when the lead off batter was hit by a pitch, and Bob Stanton singled. The next batter was retired, leaving men at 1st and 2nd, one out, and the dangerous Pete L'esperance at bat. Chelsea pitcher Perry Parker gloved a hard line drive back to the mound, then threw to first to double-up pinch runner Don Ryley for the third and final out.



League VP Wayne Davis presents the lower division championship trophy to the Chelsea team. **Standing, left to right:** Wayne Davis, Blake Thomsen, Tim Carter, Ned Battey, Wayne Coburn, Ted Hatch, Gordy Barnaby, Neil Kennedy, Mike Metcalf, Perry Parker. **Kneeling, left to right:** Art Meiggs, Jim Noel, Willie Blondin, Steve Long. Chelsea player Thornton Hayslett is not in the photo because he was operating the camera.

## Burlington is New League Champion

|                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | R | H  | E |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|---|
| <b>Burlington</b> | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 13 | 1 |
| <b>Mad River</b>  | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 9  | 1 |

On September 7 the Burlington Cardinals became the league's 6th different champion in the last 6 years by defeating Mad River Valley, 6-1, at Montpelier's Recreation Field.

Mad River's Gary MacDonald, who has stifled the powerful Killington and Morrisville teams the last 2 seasons, was battered for 12 hits and 6 runs in 4 innings on the mound. Burlington's Don Wright pitched the complete game, scattering 9 hits while striking out 3 and issuing no walks.

A key play occurred in the top of the fourth inning, with Burlington ahead by 4-1 and two outs. Bill Livingstone, who had driven in a run earlier, was on 3<sup>rd</sup> base, and Wright was on 2<sup>nd</sup> base. The Cardinal manager, Ronn Winn, hit a wicked line drive down the first base line that went in and out of the glove of first baseman Rick Marrier, and was just a foul ball. Winn then singled to drive in the 2 runners and put his team ahead by 5 runs.

Mad River's Marrier relieved MacDonald to start the 5<sup>th</sup> inning and yielded only 1 hit the rest of the way, but his team was unable to mount a threat against Wright until the top of the 8<sup>th</sup>, when Eric Moffroid and Dale Whitney singled to open the inning. But Burlington third baseman Todd Hayes fielded a smash off the bat of Sal Spinosa, tagged his base and fired to first for a double play.

Tom Simon, Pat O'Connor and Mark Leclair each had 2 hits for Burlington, and Doug Bergstein had 3 hits for Mad River Valley and scored his team's only run.



Above, the victors pose with their trophy. See page 3 to learn why Ronn Winn's shirt is a different color than that of his teammates. **Back row, left to right:** Don Wright, Len Whitehouse, Bill Livingstone, Brian Stevens, Lee Hoddsden, Pat O'Connor. **Front row, left to right:** Todd Hayes, Jim Myers, Jim Deeghan, Ronn Winn, Tom Simon, Mark Leclair, Chris Hoddsden

|            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | R  | H  | E |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|---|
| Burlington | 0 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6  | 8  | 4 |
| Missisquoi | 4 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 1 | - | 16 | 18 | 2 |

**State Championship Game**

The state championship game was held September 14 at Montpelier Recreation Field, as the Burlington Cardinals took on the Missisquoi Expos, champions of the Green Mountain MSBL. However, the Cardinals were short handed, with several players unavailable due to injury or other commitments, and they added 2 players to fill out their squad. Manager Ronn Winn selected Eddie Krasnow and Mike Wagner to be honorary Cardinals for the day.

Lacking pitcher Don Wright, the Cardinals started Bill Livingstone, and had several players at new positions. Although the team was impressive in a 2 out, 5 run rally to take the lead in the top of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and went ahead again in the top of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, they could not sustain the advantage for long, and eventually lost by 16-6. The Expos' Glenn Johnson had a single, triple and a big home run over the left field fence to lead his team. Steve Martel, Jeff Raleigh and Brian Spears also had 3 hits each for the winners, while relief pitchers Dave Bayko and Gary Lawton held Burlington to 3 hits and struck out 5 from the 4<sup>th</sup> inning on.

During the pregame ceremonies Montpelier's Lewis Franco sang the national anthem, and Governor Jim Douglas threw out the first pitch, with Jericho's Lefty Guillette acting as the catcher. The state championship series was inaugurated in 2001, and the Green Mountain MSBL representative has won all 3 games.



Above, Missisquoi's Glenn Johnson slides into 3<sup>rd</sup> with a triple, as catcher Jim Myers watches and pitcher Bill Livingstone backs up the throw to third baseman Brian Stevens. Johnson also had a 2-run home run. Photo by Wayne Perry.



Above, Missisquoi's Dave Raleigh hit this ball foul but eventually doubled to drive in the runner to tie the game in the 4<sup>th</sup> inning. Photo by Wayne Perry.



Above, Mike Wagner presents the first place trophy to Morrisville manager Dave Geoffroy.

**Final Regular Season Standings**

|                  | W  | L  | Pct. | GB   |
|------------------|----|----|------|------|
| Morrisville      | 14 | 1  | .933 | ---- |
| Killington       | 12 | 4  | .750 | 2.5  |
| Mad River Valley | 11 | 4  | .733 | 3    |
| Lake Region      | 11 | 4  | .733 | 3    |
| Burlington       | 10 | 5  | .667 | 4    |
| Champlain        | 9  | 6  | .600 | 5    |
| Jericho          | 8  | 7  | .533 | 6    |
| South Royalton   | 7  | 9  | .438 | 7.5  |
| -----            |    |    |      |      |
| Chelsea          | 6  | 8  | .429 | 7.5  |
| Montpelier       | 6  | 10 | .375 | 8.5  |
| Williston        | 6  | 10 | .375 | 8.5  |
| Danville         | 5  | 10 | .333 | 9    |
| Winooski         | 5  | 10 | .333 | 9    |
| Northfield       | 5  | 11 | .312 | 9.5  |
| Caledonia        | 4  | 12 | .250 | 10.5 |
| Newport          | 4  | 12 | .250 | 10.5 |

Games postponed and not rescheduled: 6/1 Champlain at MRV, Chelsea at Danville; 8/10 Burlington at Jericho, Chelsea at Winooski. Tie game: 8/19 Lake Region 3, Morrisville 3.

**Playoffs - round 1, Aug. 24**

**Upper Division (teams 1-8)**

Morrisville 12, South Royalton 11  
Killington 12, Jericho 1  
Mad River Valley 16, Champlain 6  
Burlington 6, Lake Region 3 (15 inn.)

**Lower Division (teams 9-16)**

Chelsea 13, Newport 5  
Montpelier 12, Caledonia 8  
Williston 18, Northfield 17  
Danville 9, Winooski 4

**Playoffs - semifinals, Aug. 31**

**Upper Division**

Mad River Valley 5, Killington 2  
Burlington 9, Morrisville 6

**Lower Division**

Chelsea 10, Danville 7  
Montpelier 6, Williston 1

**Who Are Those Guys, Anyway?**

The Green Mountain MSBL is a competing league started by teams which broke away from our league in 1995. They had 6 teams this year: Enosburg, Fairfax, Milton, Missisquoi, Underhill, Westford.

Their rules are essentially the same as ours, except that they permit 4 innings per game to be pitched by players 40-44 years old, and they permit base runners to take a lead before the pitch and try for the next base on a pickoff throw.

The state championship game was initiated in 2001, when Missisquoi defeated Killington by 13-6 to claim the title. In 2002 Enosburg beat Mad River Valley, 3-2. For the state championship game a compromise on rules is used in which the game is played using their pitching rules but our base running rules. Metal bats up to -5 are allowed.



Mad River Valley's Rick Marrier is greeted at home plate by his teammates after his 2-run home run started the scoring in the semifinal game in which MRV beat Killington, 5-2.



Tom Simon heads for the plate as Todd Hayes hits a grounder in the third inning. The play put the Cardinals ahead by 3-1.



Bob Yarnell of the Williston team throws out the first ball at the league championship. Jim Yarnell, of the Winooski team, was the catcher as the league honored their late brother Dave Yarnell, who also played in our league.



Second baseman Bill Livingstone squeezes the ball after catching a popup for the final out of the game, as pitcher Don Wright watches the play.



Don Wright of the Cardinals delivers a pitch against Mad River Valley. The second baseman is Chris Hodsdon.



Cardinals manager Ronn Winn gets a Gatorade shower after the game.

## Interview: Tom Simon



*Tom Simon, 38, has just completed his 4<sup>th</sup> season in the league. He is a partner in the Burlington law firm of McCormick, Fitzpatrick, Kasper & Burchard, P.C. His wife, Carolyn, is a prosecutor for the State of Vermont. They are expecting their first child in February.*

### **VSBN: Tell us about your baseball background.**

**Tom:** My dad played shortstop at Georgetown University and in the New Jersey State League, so I got an early start. I was always pretty small for my age but batted left-handed and had the knack for going after fly balls. As a sophomore in high school they moved me from the infield to center field, which was a good thing even though I didn't think so at the time. I was a bunter and a stealer; I never hit a home run in my life until the summer after my junior year in high school. That year we won the New Jersey state championship, with several players receiving Division I scholarships. Not me. I made second-team All-State as a senior and tried to walk on to the team during my freshman year at the University of Virginia, but I'd torn my hamstring playing American Legion that summer and was hobbling during the fall tryouts. My game depended on speed so I decided to hang up my metal spikes in the fall of 1983 – I thought for good. I must have peaked at some point between then and the summer of 2000, when I turned 35 and joined the Champlain Whales, because I hit better now than I ever did back then.

### **VSBN: How did you come to join the Whales?**

**Tom:** I'd met Ronn Winn through the Gardner-Waterman Chapter of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR), which is the Vermont chapter of a worldwide organization of baseball history enthusiasts. We held meetings with guests like baseball authors or former players; made annual trips to Cooperstown; sponsored historical markers for Larry Gardner, Ray Collins, Ray Fisher, and Centennial Field; and worked together to produce a book called *Green Mountain Boys of Summer: Vermonters in the Major Leagues, 1882-1993* (New England Press). Ronn told me about the Old Timers Baseball Association and I was interested. I'd been playing softball and I was curious to see if I could still hit a baseball. Ronn played for the Champlain Whales, so I joined that team. I loved playing with the Whales, but when Ronn started the Burlington Cardinals last year with several friends from SABR, I felt my loyalty was to them.

### **VSBN: What are some of your most memorable moments in Senior League baseball?**

**Tom:** When I was playing for the Whales, I hit one onto the roof of the school down at Chelsea. In our first Burlington Cardinals game, I hit a grand slam in a snowstorm at Winooski. In this year's playoffs I went three-for-three with a walk against Bill Lee, and he later said I hit like Tony Oliva. On the negative side, a ball bounced out of my glove and over the fence for a game-ending grand slam in our last regular-season game. Those Winooski guys won't let me forget that. But my most memorable moment was winning this year's Championship.

### **VSBN: Were you surprised that the Cardinals did so well in this year's playoffs?**

**Tom:** I was shocked. There's really not much difference, at least in terms of personnel, between this year's team and the team that finished 4-10 and got knocked out in the first round of last year's lower-division playoffs. Len Whitehouse got hurt and pitched only a couple innings for us the whole season. The key to our success was Don Wright. He changes speeds, puts the ball exactly where he wants it (probably from years of pitching batting practice to Little Leaguers), and rarely walks anybody. Plus he's smart, even-tempered, and durable. Without Don, we wouldn't have gone very far.



### **VSBN: Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the league?**

**Tom:** First off, I think the Vermont Senior League is one of the greatest things ever. After being out of baseball for 17 years and figuring I'd never play again, I now appreciate each game like it could be my last – which it could! And the atmosphere is perfect, with wooden bats and mountain views at so many of our fields. Driving into Chelsea or South Royalton on a game day, you get the feel of what it must have been like when town teams played each other 100 years ago. That said, I do have one suggestion: I think we should hold both the lower- and upper-division championships every year at Montpelier's Recreation Field, with the first game at 11 a.m. and the second at 2 p.m. We should get the barbecue going, maybe a keg or two of beer if they'll let us, encourage all the teams to attend, and turn it into a year-end party.

### **VSBN: Have you considered playing on the league's team at the MSBL World Series in Phoenix?**

**Tom:** I'd like to do it someday but I've usually used up all my vacation days by November. ♦





76 year old Floyd Brown comes to the plate for his only at bat of the season, June 15 against Lake Region. He grounded out to the pitcher.



Killington's #45 Ray Foley had the right stuff when he pitched a 4-hit complete game win on May 18.



Newport players interrupted a game to sing Happy Birthday to pitcher Henry Pion (#8), who turned 50.



Montpelier manager Charlie Barasch gives the next batter the sign to 'swing away' after reaching base on a walk against the Williston Armadillos.



Jose Agorrea of Winooski shows great form on the mound.



Killington's Lance Mills turns to bunt as 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman Greg O'Shea of Mad River Valley charges in.

## Letters to the Editor

Send letters by email to [baseball@neknetwork.com](mailto:baseball@neknetwork.com) or by regular mail c/o Mike Wagner, P.O. Box 10, Newport, VT 05855. Every letter must be signed, but your name will not be printed if you so request.

### To the Editor:

Why don't we have a double elimination format for our playoffs? Some teams might just have a bad day in September and if they have had a good season the whole season shouldn't hinge on one bad day. I am suggesting something along the line of a losers column where one stays alive despite a loss. This might be hard but I know guys just like to play ball and a couple of years the season came to a halt too soon for me. Thanks, JRW.

### Dear JRW:

In theory it is true that a double elimination format, such as the College World Series, reduces the penalty for having one bad day, or having to play on a day when a specific player is not available. But unlike the CWS we play only once a week, so we don't use up our pitching staffs with a lot of games. The real argument against double elimination, however, has to do with the amount of time required to complete it. This is assuming that we continue to play only on Sundays throughout the playoffs. It adds 2 or 3 extra weeks, and the final day could be 2 games.

If you have 8 teams in single elimination, as at present, it takes 3 weeks total to complete the process. But if you have 8 teams in double elimination, it takes 5 or 6 weeks total to complete the process.

**Week 1:** 8 teams play in 4 games

**Week 2:** 8 teams play in 4 games, and 2 teams are eliminated due to 2 losses.

**Week 3:** 6 teams play in 3 games, and 2 teams are eliminated due to 2 losses.

**Week 4:** 4 teams play in 2 games, and 1 or 2 teams are eliminated due to 2 losses.

**Weeks 5 and 6:** determine the champion

The idea is worthy of discussion at the league meeting, but the risk is getting mired down in a time consuming process which could be lengthened by rainouts. To create the time we would have to consider making the regular season shorter. Also in double elimination, you could play the same team twice, even 3 times. ♦

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**Next issue: March 2004**

## Bottom of the Lineup By Mike Wagner, Editor



Last winter I couldn't wait for the season to start, then after we lost a bunch of games in a row I couldn't wait for it to end.

But then came August 3, and my team played its best game in years, with good fielding, good pitching, and just enough hitting to edge Morrisville by 2-1. It ended their regular season winning streak at 19 games, one short of Killington's record, and it was their only loss of the year until the playoffs.

During that game I came up to bat against Ray Haas in the bottom of the 8<sup>th</sup> inning with 2 outs and 2 runners on base, with a chance to extend our lead. Getting ready to hit I remembered an at bat I had against him in 2000 when he pitched for South Royalton. It was a playoff game, and after we had fallen behind 8-0 we started to rally and trailed 8-3 when I came up in the 7<sup>th</sup> inning with the bases loaded and 2 outs. Ray was pitching in relief of Mike Czok.

On the first pitch I hit a long drive down the right field line, foul. That seemed to energize both teams, as our guys sensed that we could get right back in the game, and the Royals could see the lead they had patiently built up slipping away. The count went to 3 and 2 and then I fouled off at least 5 pitches. On every pitch the chatter was intense, with my teammates yelling encouragement and the Royals doing the same. The fans were busy retrieving all the foul balls. Ray Haas is 6 feet 4, and throws hard. You don't get much time to look over the pitch and make a decision. He is right-handed and I bat left-handed. So when the next pitch was headed straight for my hands I instinctively leaned back and then was unable to react when the ball broke back over the inside of the plate for called strike three. In the 9<sup>th</sup> inning we closed the score to 8-5 and I was on deck when the last out was made. And that was the last time I batted against him until this game against Morrisville.

My son John, who had walked to start the 8<sup>th</sup> inning and advanced when Haas dropped Mike Coutu's pop-up, was the runner on second base, and I could see him leading away with each pitch. I wanted to drive him in so the team would have an insurance run. The count got to 2 and 2, but Ray didn't throw that backwards slider or screwball, whatever it was, but he didn't have to, as I swung over the top of a pitch down the middle. I don't know if it was a regular fastball or a sinker, as I didn't watch the ball all the way in. Three years of preparation came to naught.

In the top of the 9<sup>th</sup>, we got the first 2 guys out, but our ace reliever Neil Stanzione walked Rick Emery and then Stu Maynard lined a single to right field, sending Emery to 3<sup>rd</sup> base with the potential tying run. But Gary Potter lined out to third baseman Vince Buttice and we won. It was fitting that Vince ended up with the ball at the end of the game as he had pitched into the 7<sup>th</sup> inning before tiring and was the guy most responsible for our being in the lead at that point.

I know what I'm going to do differently the next time I face Ray Haas. But of course I don't know what he will do differently, and that's why this is such a great game. ♦