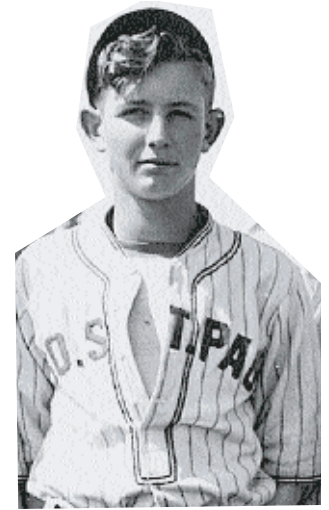




American Legion Minnesota Division I Tournament

Gazette



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Kelly keynotes Division I Banquet

Tom Kelly, who managed the Minnesota Twins to two World Championships, had some words of baseball advice to the 300 players gathered for the Minnesota American Legion Division I Tournament.

"You have to get after it, you have to make it a passion," Kelly told the annual banquet, held this year at Chaska High School.

Kelly said he played Legion ball back in the 1960s. He said, in those days, it would be normal to play five games on Saturday and Sunday.

He challenged the players to give it everything they've got. "Are you just there? Or are you playing the game? We don't get that many

opportunities."

Kelly said he was not a role model, and the players should look to their parents for best role models. "Do you remember who drove you to all those Little League games, soccer games and the rest?"

He also advised the players to respect the game, and he recalled one time that his father wouldn't take him to a game because he hadn't packed the shoe polish for his cleats. "My father said, 'If you're not going to do anything good, you should at least look good trying to do it.'"

Marney Gellner of Fox Sport North was the emcee for the banquet program.

The Legion baseball committee honored several people with annual awards.

Eden Valley and Watkins posts were named Post of the Year, and Doug Schuette of Brownton was named Coach of the Year.

The two Graduates of the year were Mike Halloran of Edina and Charley Walters of Minneapolis Edison. Halloran is the only person to be named the most valuable player at the Legion World Series and then come back and coach a team to the championship (Eden Prairie this past year). Walters is a sports columnist for the St. Paul Pioneer Press.

Ron Beckman, the coach at Jordan, the winner of several state and regional titles, was named to the Legion's Baseball Hall of Fame.

State Baseball Director Darwin Berg, who will be retiring after this tournament, was honored with a special plaque by Department Commander Chuck Kruger.

The banquet kicks off the annual Legion tournament. The audience watched a moving video on veterans that was produced by the Chaska Middle School.

16 teams gather to do battle

The 86th Division I American Legion Baseball tournament gets underway today at four fields near and in Chaska.

The tourney will feature 16 teams from Minnesota's 10 baseball districts competing in a double-elimination format.

There will be 16 games the first day, and action will continue through the weekend. The championship game will be at Athletic Park in Chaska on Monday in a 2 p.m. game.

The teams that play for the championship game will both advance to the Legion's Central Plains Regional in Dickinson, N.D., and the winner of that tournament will advance to the World Series in Shelby, North Carolina.

The final American Legion Baseball experts' poll had Eastview on top, replacing Burnsville in the final week.

Eden Prairie, last year's National Champions, came into this tourney rated 5th by the poll.

1. Eastview, 143
2. Burnsville, 130
3. Tri-City Red, 114

4. Edina, 98
5. Eden Prairie, 77
6. Grand Rapids, 53
7. Hopkins, 45
8. Lakeville North, 44
9. Excelsior, 29
10. Waite Park, 19
11. New Ulm Gold, 17
12. Bemidji, 15
13. Winona, 9
14. Alexandria, 7
15. Coon Rapids, 5
15. North St. Paul, 5
15. Maple Grove, 5
18. Fergus Falls, 4.
19. Minneapolis Giantvalley, 3
20. Lakeville South, 1
20. Monticello, 1
20. Richfield, 1

But once the first pitch is thrown, the poll means little. The state champion will be decided on the field. The bracket format has been changed this year to allow more teams to stay in the tourney longer.



TOM KELLY