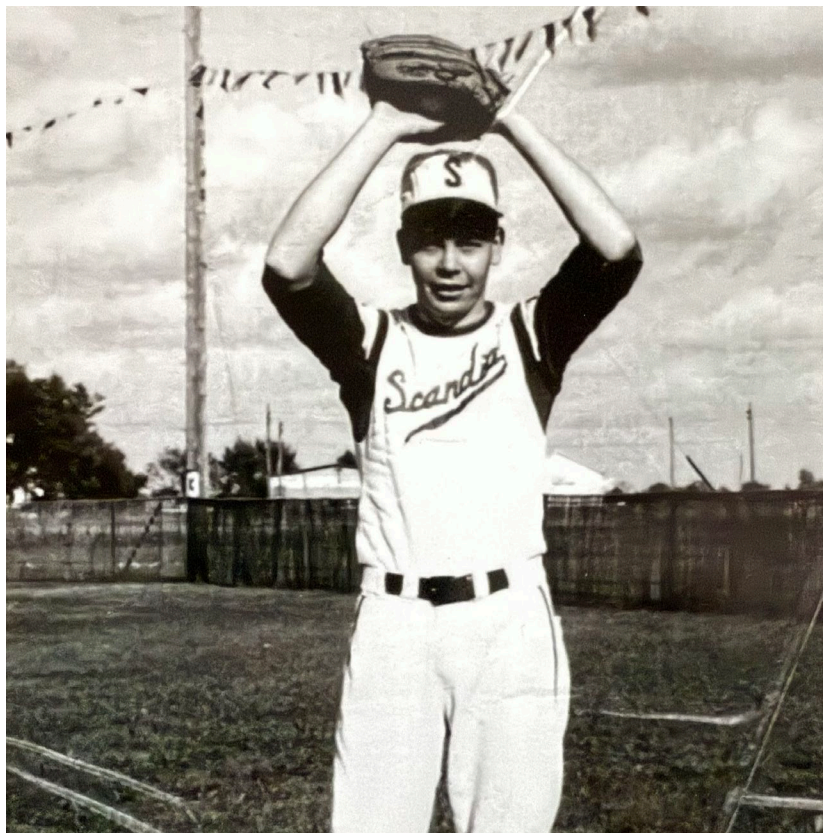


DOMINATING THE DIAMOND

History of Scandia Men's Fastpitch Softball

*By Renee Barnes, Reveal History, LLC
July 8, 2025*



This project has been financed in part with funds provided by
the State of Minnesota from the Arts and Cultural Heritage
Fund through the Minnesota Historical Society.

Introduction and Executive Summary

by Renee Barnes and Dan Lindgren

This research report details the rich history and cultural impact of men's fastpitch softball in Scandia, Minnesota. Funded by a 2025 Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant, the project highlights little Scandia's remarkable success in a statewide amateur sport, including eleven State Tournament wins and eight National Tournament appearances. Even more remarkable is that this dynamic team emerged from a tiny town whose population remained just under 1,000 residents throughout the 1930s and '40s. Even today, Scandia's population is under 4,000.

Before chronicling Scandia fastpitch through the decades, this context traces the origins of softball from its 1887 inception in Chicago to its adoption and popularization in Minnesota as "kitten ball."

Although a 1966 tournament program says Scandia's fastpitch team formed just after WWII (see Appendix A), the existence of a Goldsmith wool uniform in the local Gammelgården Museum archives – donated by descendants of successful local banker Henry Johnson – led to suspicion that a deeper history exists. A study of the uniform's label dated it to approximately 1926 to 1933 – and an archival newspaper search discovered a *Forest Lake Times* article documenting Scandia competing in a new Chisago Lakes Kittenball League that formed in 1932. The Scandia team won the league pennant that year, according to an Aug. 31 *Stillwater Post-Messenger* article. Pitchers Lowell Johnson and Reuben Johnson are credited with 17 season wins and only three losses.

Banker Henry Johnson had a brother named Reuben and a son named Lowell – likely not a coincidence since the uniform was found in Henry's Scandia home.

By 1939, Scandia's Lester "Lefty" Benson appeared on the scene, with *Forest Lake Times* articles referencing him playing on a team called the Gamble Store Gamboliers,



Goldsmith, a sporting goods manufacturer based in Cincinnati, operated from 1890 to 1967. This wool uniform, discovered in Henry Johnson's Scandia home (he was pitcher Lowell Johnson's father), features a Goldsmith logo dating from 1926 to 1933, according to a Goldsmith Baseball Dating Guide. While it's uncertain whether it's a softball or baseball uniform, Lowell Johnson was known to be a member of early an early Scandia kittenball team.

part of a Forest Lake League and assumed to be a team of Forest Lake players. Benson had graduated from Forest Lake High School in 1938, so perhaps he knew players from the area – or perhaps other Scandia men may have been on the team (names of players are included later in this report but have not been researched).

During this same season, a 1939 article in the *Forest Lake Times* also reports that Benson “put on a fine exhibition” in a Scandia game against Forest Lake.



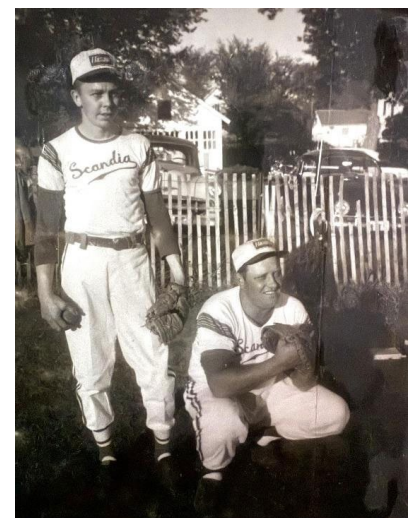
Lester “Lefty” Benson

The first reference to Scandia participating in a State Tournament in local newspapers was in 1940. Stories reference pitcher L. Benson and catcher J. (Jimmy) Croone, with Scandia losing to Hastings in the opening round of the single-elimination tournament. By this time, the State Tournament had been divided into two divisions by population: 'Class AA' for cities with over 10,000 residents and 'Class A' for communities with fewer than 10,000 residents.

Momentum for Scandia softball began in earnest after WWII. With the 1949 construction of a lighted ballfield to call its own – an unusual accomplishment for a town of 900 residents – Scandia began a stretch of fielding at least one league team every year for the next 60+ years. Scandia became so successful in the 1950s that, by the early 1960s, news articles show Scandia sometimes competing in Class AA against the state's larger cities.

One early Scandia player, Phil Anderson, is credited with recruiting and mentoring young pitcher Wayne Erickson, who emerged into a formidable force. Anderson started playing in 1946 at age 19, learning from successful early players. The two were a dynamic duo, with Anderson catching for Erickson over the years.

Erickson played for multiple teams in his younger years. In 1960, a *Forest Lake Times* article about Scandia touts him as one of the “comers” in softball hurling ranks. The same year, Erickson was awarded the Hokanson Trophy for outstanding play after pitching for Minneapolis’s Maurer’s Bar in the Harris Tournament.



Wayne Erickson and Phil Anderson, courtesy Wayne Erickson collection.

In 1963, the Scandia team clinched the Class A State Championship, with Erickson named Most Valuable Player for the entire tournament. Moving to Class AA, the team later boasted three state championships in a row – 1967, '68, and '69 – again under storied pitcher Wayne Erickson.

Much of Scandia's success can be attributed to its series of top pitchers over the years. The aforementioned "Lefty" Benson established a true softball community in the 1930s and '40s, creating momentum that fed into later success. In a 1987 news column, Twin Cities sportswriter Dan Stoneking* writes, "Erickson could make the ball dip and dance, go this way and that way. He baffled hitters consistently."



Photo courtesy Wayne Erickson collection.

By the early 1970s, behind the dominant arm of Jim Lindberg and the powerful bat of Greg Benson (Lester's son), Scandia continued its winning ways. The team clinched the AA State Championship in 1971, with a runner-up finish in 1976. The top two finishers in the State Tournament qualified for regional play, and Scandia made the record book at the 1976 Regional Tournament in Duluth – but not for winning. In a storied semi-final game against Mankato, Scandia lost 2-1 after playing a record 25 innings ... with all 25 pitched by Lindberg.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, Scandia again saw a resurgence behind the pitching of Greg Isaacson, who led his team to a Class A State Title in 1987. This year also marked Scandia's first trip to a National Tournament. Under the leadership of Manager Richard Quigley, Scandia would qualify to make that trip eight years in a row.



Pitcher Greg Isaacson raises the team's trophy.
Courtesy Greg Isaacson

At the time, Scandia boasted three successful teams, the youngest of which would win their own Class 'C' State Title in 1990. Later in the 1990s, the two youngest teams combined and won Scandia's most recent State Title in 1999, behind the pitching arm of Jeff Berglund and Greg Isaacson's younger brother, Chris. Greg Benson's three sons (Mike, Ryan, and Josh) all played

for Scandia teams in the 1990s, creating a legacy of three Benson generations participating in Minnesota State Tournaments.

Today, five Scandia natives are in the Minnesota Softball Hall of Fame – as well as several additional Scandia players who hail from other cities and played primarily for other teams. A portion of this report is dedicated to the biographies of Scandia players inducted into the Minnesota Softball Hall of Fame, including Wayne Erickson, Phil Anderson, Jim Lindberg, Doniver Ahlm, and Greg Benson. Their individual contributions underscore the collective talent that defined Scandia's teams.

Beyond the competitive aspect of fastpitch softball, community involvement was profound. This report highlights how softball games became a central event for the town, fostering intergenerational participation, unique fundraising efforts, and unwavering fan support. The dedication of families, local businesses, and players transformed games into significant social gatherings.

On a related note, women's fastpitch softball has its own Scandia story to tell, with active teams continuing through today (perhaps the topic of a future report!) Meanwhile, across the state, men's fastpitch popularity has significantly declined. In recent years, Scandia native Dan Lindgren has worked to bring the sport back to Scandia – recreating the St. Croix Valley League and hosting an annual tournament at the Wayne Erickson Memorial Ball Park.

In conclusion, Scandia's fastpitch legacy is attributed to exceptional pitching talent and robust community backing. This report asserts that despite a decline in men's fastpitch popularity in the 21st century, the passion for the game endures in Scandia, commemorated by landmarks like Wayne Erickson Memorial Ball Park (a newer park name commemorated with a sign in June 2012) – and the community's enduring memories of its fastpitch glory days.



Formerly known as the "lighted ball field," the Wayne Erickson Memorial Ball Park was dedicated on June 8, 2012. Photo of Boy Scout Zach Boesel by Phillip Bock, courtesy *Scandia-Marine Country Messenger*.

Renee Barnes, MFA, is a St. Paul-based historian, a lifelong softball player, and owner of Reveal History LLC. Dan Lindgren is a Scandia native who played for the local men's fastpitch team in the 1980s – including on the 1987 State Championship team.

**Dan Stoneking. Fastpitch comes full cycle in Scandia. Let's Play Softball, July 23-24, 1987.*

Acknowledgments

This project could not be possible without the dedication of the Scandia Community. The Scandia Heritage Alliance, which was formed in 2018 to preserve, protect and educate the public about the heritage, arts, cultural and natural resources in Scandia, was essential in securing a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant in 2025 to research Scandia's Softball legacy. This context is a product of that grant. I sincerely thank Sue Rodsjo for her invaluable contributions, including photos, player introductions, Scandia insights, and extensive information on Scandia softball that she had already gathered.

This project would not be possible without the time and effort of those who played softball in Scandia, and those who were willing to share their stories during in-person or video interviews or over emails. I would like to thank Doniver Ahlm, Greg Benson, Jim Lindberg, Dan Lindgren, the daughters of Wayne Erickson (Linda, Lynette, Deborah), Perry Coonce, Richard Quigley, and Greg Isaacson.

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Table of Contents

Introduction and Executive Summary	2
Acknowledgments	6
Table of Contents	7
The Origins of Softball	8
History of Scandia	13
The Scandia Softball Story	14
The late 1930s and 1940s	14
The 1950s	21
The 1960s and the Rise of Wayne Erickson	25
The 1970s	36
The 1980s	41
The 1990s	49
The 2000s	54
Minnesota Softball Hall of Fame	56
Wayne Erickson (1984)	57
Jim Lindberg (2022)	58
Phil Anderson (2022)	58
Doniver Ahlm (2022)	59
Greg Benson (2023)	60
Joseph “Dutz” Junker (2001)	61
Joe Eichten (2023)	61
Softball and the Community	61
Conclusion	63
Annotated Bibliography	64

The Origins of Softball

Chicago, Illinois. Thanksgiving Day, 1887. A group of young men were gathered inside of the Farragut Boat Club to wait for telegrams regarding the Harvard vs. Yale football game, in which Yale was victorious. A Yale supporter threw a rolled-up boxing glove at a Harvard supporter. The Harvard supporter saw it coming and grabbed a nearby stick to take a swing at the glove. George Hancock, a reporter who witnessed this interaction, exclaimed “Let’s play ball!” and developed a version of indoor baseball, played with the glove tied into a ball shape and hit with the stick.¹

The popularity of this indoor ball sport took off in Chicago and other states in the Midwest, including Minnesota since it could be played indoors during the harsh winter months. The new game was also versatile, allowing all ages and genders to play.

In 1895, Lieutenant Lewis Rober of the Minneapolis Fire Department No. 19 Engine House, hearing about this indoor baseball game, created an indoor league for the Minneapolis Fire Department. The indoor league helped sedentary firemen exercise and build morale during the long winter months. Rober called his team the “Kittens”; and the term “kitten ball” was coined for the game. When the weather was nicer, the game moved outdoors to the field next to the station. The pitcher's mound was 35 feet from home plate. The teams used a small medicine ball to play.² The rules for playing kitten ball were first published in 1906.³ The game at this time had a few names: indoor baseball, indoor-outdoor ball, diamond ball, and kitten ball. Though based on baseball, it was strictly a game of recreation and did not require a high degree of organization, but organized leagues were established throughout the Twin Cities.⁴

¹Jenkins, Colby. Sliding Into History: The Legacy of USU Women's Softball Champions 1980 – 1981: Origins and History of Softball, electronic document, <https://libguides.usu.edu/c.php?g=1418906&p=10519019#:~:text=On%20Thanksgiving%20day%201887%2C%20a,Yale%20football%20game.%20News%20of>, accessed April 2025.

²Rees, Alex. The History of Softball: How did it all get started? Electronic document, <https://www.flosoftball.com/articles/6750269-the-history-of-softball-how-did-it-all-get-started>, accessed April 2025.

³ *Official Kitten League Guide*, 1906.

⁴ Kawarsky, Irwin. “The Evolution and History of Softball in the United States.” Electronic document, <https://www.softballhistoryusa.com/the-evolution-and-history-of-softball-in-the-united-states/>, accessed April and May 2025.



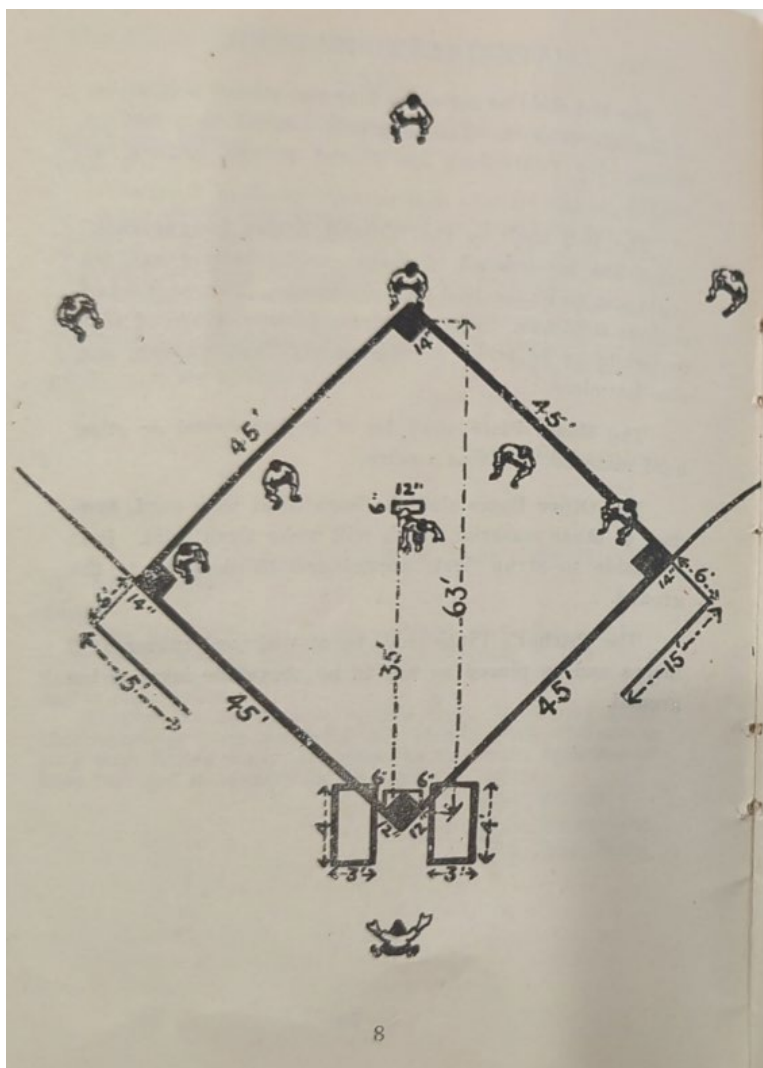
Louis Rober in 1916 Kitten Ball League Guide.

In 1913, the Minneapolis Park Board officially adopted kitten ball for play on their park board's playgrounds, moving the sport outdoors. Within two years, the game had also established a strong presence in St. Paul, leading to the formation of leagues in both cities.⁵

The Official Kitten League Guide, published by Rober in 1916, updated the 1906 official guide. The guide's preface stated that "the game has been recommended by playground officials and others who have found it invaluable to the man, woman, or child who desires a mild and beneficial kind of exercise."⁶ The guide also detailed how Rober manufactured the kitten ball completely by hand and provided exact specifications for the game. The ball was 6 ounces, 12 ¼ inches around, and made of materials to make it fast and durable, but also harmless. The bat was to be not more than two inches in diameter at the largest part and limited to 2-feet, 10-inches long. There were no restrictions on material or weight of the bat.

⁵ Ibid., page 5 and 6.

⁶ Official Kitten League Guide, published May 31, 1916, available at the Minnesota Historical Society.



Drawing in 1916 Kitten Ball Guide detailing the measurements of a playing field.

The home plate was one-foot square and made of rubber, wood, or other hard material. The other bases were bags filled with sand, sawdust, or other material to make them solid and strapped to the ground. Finally, the pitcher's plate was whitened rubber of 6-X-12 inches and placed at the level of the ground.⁷ The dimensions of the field were 45 feet between bases and 35 feet from the pitcher's rubber to home plate.⁸ The 1916 guide also gave directions for laying out the diamond in five minutes; instructions to umpires; and the rules and regulations. The early game consisted of nine innings, but the pitch was delivered below the hip unlike overhead as in baseball.⁹ It is interesting to note that a glove was not listed as a requirement to play the game.

⁷ Ibid., page 7.

⁸ Ibid., page 9.

⁹ Ibid., pages 9-11.

As mentioned above, the Minneapolis and St. Paul park boards organized kitten ball leagues and, in 1916, the first tournament occurred. The winner for Minneapolis was a team called Riverside, and for St. Paul, a team called Palace. There was a championship game played between the two at the State Fair, but the winner was not recorded in newspapers or on the ASA State Championships website.¹⁰

Four years after the first kitten ball tournament in 1920, the Minneapolis Park Board had 64 men's teams in 11 divisions and 24 women's teams in four divisions registered.¹¹ The numbers for St. Paul are unknown for 1920, but in fall 1915, nine leagues were registered in St. Paul.¹²

More teams organized throughout the state. Within the newspapers, "kitten ball", "indoor ball" "diamond ball" and "softball" terms were used interchangeably for basically the same game. The first mention of "softball" leagues in Duluth was June 1924 and a girl's "kitten ball" league formed a month later in Owatonna.^{13, 14} In 1925, the Minneapolis team, Minnehaha Cleaners, requested to play an "indoor ball" game with Owatonna.¹⁵

In 1925, the first statewide diamond ball tournament was held during the state fair with the finals played at Parade Stadium in Minneapolis and Dunning Field in St. Paul. There was a north and south division, which included teams from Duluth and Winona, along with the Twin Cities. The winners went on to play for the overall championship, which was Bertch Furniture of Minneapolis.¹⁶ By the next year, seven teams participated in the tournament from the cities of Minneapolis, St. Paul, Faribault, Albert Lea, Winona, Duluth and Hibbing. M. Cook and Sons of Duluth defeated J.R. Watkins of Winona, 5-4.¹⁷

The organization of the state tournament underwent numerous changes in its early stages. The Minnesota state tournament underwent a two-division split in 1930, though the reason for the organization of these divisions remains unclear.¹⁸ By 1931, a Men's AA Fastpitch division was introduced, seemingly catering to smaller town teams. However, by 1932, St. Paul had a Men's

¹⁰ 1916 ASA State Championships, <https://softballhistorymn.com/category/1916/>, accessed May 3, 2025.

¹¹ Kawarsky.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ *Duluth Herald*, "Two Softball Leagues Formed," June 10, 1924, page 21.

¹⁴ *Daily People's Press*, "Second Half of Kittenball Season Begins," June 25, 1924, page 3.

¹⁵ *Daily People's Press*, "St. Paul Team Wants Indoor Ball Game Here," January 13, 1925, page 4.

¹⁶ 1925 ASA State Championships, <https://softballhistorymn.com/category/1925/>, accessed May 3, 2025.

¹⁷ 1926 ASA State Championships, <https://softballhistorymn.com/category/1926/>, accessed May 5, 2025.

¹⁸ 1930 ASA State Championships, <https://softballhistorymn.com/category/1930/>, accessed June 16, 2025.

A Fastpitch class within the state tournament.¹⁹ By the late 1930s, the Class A designation was firmly established for small towns with populations under 10,000.

In 1933, Leo Fischer and Michael J. Pauley, from Chicago, hosted a large softball tournament at the World's Fair in Chicago, not only to bring more recognition to the sport but also to form statewide organizations that made up a national government body.²⁰ This first tournament included 55 teams, which were divided into fastpitch, slowpitch, and women's softball and used a 14-inch ball.²¹ Over 70,000 spectators watched the first round of play.²² The national authority on the sport, the Joint Rules Committee, approved the formation of the Amateur Softball Association (ASA) after this competition in Chicago (since 2015, it has been under the name of USA Softball).²³

Fastpitch began to differentiate itself from baseball in 1934, at which point the game was shortened from nine innings to seven.²⁴

Since Thanksgiving Day 1887, the sport has been called many things: kitten ball, mush ball, diamond ball, indoor-outdoor, and playground ball.²⁵ In March 1934, the National Recreation Association voted to simplify all the various names used for the game and to simply call it "softball."²⁶

By 1948, softball was very popular in the United States. with an estimated 131,000,000 spectators that year. The number grew over the next few years, as did interest in night games. At the time, there were over 50,000 lighted ball fields in the United States. One article in the *Duluth News Tribune* stated: "Space doesn't permit listing attendance figures of the various national pastimes sports, but take our word for it - softball is way out in front in fan appeal."²⁷

Two years later, the ASA surveyed the general softball playing population and found 65,210 registered teams and a total of 8,153 leagues in the United States, with Michigan and Ohio leading in the number of players and teams. The survey also found 3,620 lighted fields and

¹⁹ 1931 ASA State Championships, <https://softballhistorymn.com/category/1931/>, accessed June 16, 2025; 1932 ASA State Championships, <https://softballhistorymn.com/category/1933/>, accessed June 16, 2025;

²⁰ Rees.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Baker, Lisa Lee. "Women's History Month Great Time to Reflect on Softball's Great History." Electronic Document, <https://nfca.org/easyblog/womens-history-month-great-time-to-reflect-on-softballs-rich-history>, accessed April 2025.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Kawarsky.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ *Duluth Herald*, "Hard and Softball Leagues to be Formed," April 24, 1934, page 12.

²⁷ *Duluth News Tribune*, "Sports Round Table," Sunday May 2, 1948, page 56.

16,203 playing areas throughout the country.²⁸ Ohio had the most lighted fields with 186. Another survey conducted found that around 125 million people watched softball games in 1950.²⁹

In June 1932, Duluth teams traveled to Ontario, Canada to play games.³⁰ Later that same year in August a second set of games were played in Canada,³¹ Solidifying Minnesota not only as a national contender in the game, but also an international one.

After many years of the World Softball Tournament being held in Illinois, Michigan, Ohio Colorado, Connecticut, and Florida, Minnesota was chosen to host the 1954 tournament.³² Minneapolis hosted again just four years later. Fastpitch softball dominated the Minnesota sports landscape for four decades. Even when slow pitch softball achieved formal recognition in 1953 and was added to the ASA, it wasn't for another four years that the Minneapolis Metro held a tournament for slow pitch.³³

History of Scandia

The small hamlet of Scandia is well-known as the home of the first Swedish settlement in Minnesota. Two miles south of the Scandia Village Center, a 22-foot high obelisk of Minnesota granite was erected in 1900 dedicated to the early settlers: Carl Fernstrom, Oscar Roos, and August Sandahl. The three young men left Sweden to emigrate to America and by 1850, Fernstrom and Roos were in Illinois working as farmhands. Fernstrom decided to travel up to the Marine Mills area (Marine on St. Croix) of Minnesota. Fernstrom found land near Hay Lake that he felt was perfect for settling, so he headed to Illinois to convince Roos and Sandahl to come to Minnesota.³⁴ They staked out 40 acres of land and built a substantial log house in October of 1850. One year later, they sold the farm to Daniel Nilson, another Swedish immigrant.³⁵ The Swedish Lutheran Congregation was organized in the same log cabin in 1854.

²⁸ This number is far less than the previous paragraph reported in the Duluth News Tribune just two years earlier. No reason for the discrepancy could be found.

²⁹ Kawarsky, Irwin. *The Evolution and History of Softball in the United States*, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Education at Drake University, January 1956, <https://www.softballhistoryusa.com/the-evolution-and-history-of-softball-in-the-united-states/>, accessed May 8, 2025.

³⁰ *Duluth Herald*, "Milkmen Will Invade Canada For Two Games," June 27, 1932, page 10.

³¹ *Duluth Herald*, "Milkmen To Play In Two Contests At Fort William," August 13, 1932, page 6.

³² *Star Tribune*, "S-Ball's Opportunity," February 3, 1954, page 17.

³³ David Levinson & Karen Christensen, ed. (1996). *Encyclopedia of World Sports*. London & New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 371–73; 1957 ASA State Champions. Electronic document, <https://softballhistorymn.com/category/1957/>, accessed May 5, 2025.

³⁴ Anna Engquist. *Scandia - Then and Now*. The Croixside Press, Stillwater, Minnesota, 1974, page 9.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, page 10.

Services were held there until 1856, when the first Elim Church structure was built near Hay Lake and Sand Lake – initially called Marine Church.³⁶

In 1861, the congregation moved to its current location, and a village soon formed. In 1879, Frank Lake established a Farmers Store, later called the Scandia Mercantile. Over the next few decades, the following were also established: two banks, a post office, a butcher shop, a barber shop, blacksmith, school, feed mill and store, telephone cooperative, millinery, and a dairy cooperative. New Scandia Township was formed in 1893.³⁷

After the turn of the 20th century, the town continued to grow. By the end of World War II, many in the town were looking for extracurricular activities.

By the 1950s, the area became a bedroom community for the Twin Cities due to suburban expansion and highway development. The growth was steady, and in 2007, the City of Scandia was incorporated.³⁸

The Scandia Softball Story

The 1930s and 1940s

The first mention of kitten ball games in Washington County occurred in July 1928, with an announcement of a series of games played at the county fair.³⁹ There was no mention of the teams or winners in later issues of the *Forest Lake Times*. Just one month later, another mention of a kitten ball game as part of the Columbus Farmer's Club picnic activities in the *Forest Lake Times*.⁴⁰ Again no mention of participants or winners in subsequent issues of the newspaper.

Although a story printed in a 1966 Scandia Invitational Tournament program (see Appendix) says that “Les” Benson and Stan Sandquist started the Scandia team in 1946, research indicates that a Scandia team had formed by the early 1930s, with pitchers Lowell and Rueben Johnson at the mound. However, it appears that play may have halted during WWII, and perhaps earlier history was lost in Scandia lore. (*Note that the 1930s team played in a Chisago Lakes League, and a search of Chisago Lakes area newspapers has not been conducted at this point since they are only available on microfilm – an opportunity for further research.*)

³⁶ Ibid., page 14.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Bluestem Heritage Group. Selected Historic Sites in Scandia. Report submitted to the Scandia Heritage Alliance, March 4, 2021, page 7.

³⁹ *Forest Lake Times*, “Washington County Fair Plans Completed,” July 19, 1928, page 1.

⁴⁰ *Forest Lake Times*, “Columbus Farmer's Club to Hold Picnic,” August 9, 1928, page 1.

Before the war, news articles indicated Lester Benson gaining notoriety before being drafted. He shows up playing for a Forest Lake team called the Gamble Store Gamboliers, with limited references to him pitching for a Scandia team.



Stanley Sandquist

The 1966 program names other post-WWII Scandia players as Jim Croone, Lowell Isaacson, Jim Berglund, Phil Anderson, L. Johnson (believed to be Lorraine Johnson), Bob Bruss, and Leroy Carlson -- later adding Roger Hagstrom and Lyle Martinson. "Many old timers in the area claim that Roger Hagstrom was the best center-fielder the league ever had," says the history overview. "Les 'Lefty' Benson for many years was the main stay on the mound."

The existence of an earlier Scandia uniform donated to Gammelgården Museum of Scandia led to a search for evidence of the pre-WWII kitten ball play in Scandia. This wool uniform -- donated by descendants of local banker Henry Johnson, President of Scandia State Bank -- features a label that says "Goldsmith." The company was identified as a Cincinnati-based sporting



This wool uniform was donated to Gammelgården Museum by descendants of Henry Johnson, who was historically President of Scandia State Bank (photo above). Donation files did not indicate who had worn the uniform.



goods manufacturer that operated from 1890 to 1967. A study of the Goldsmith Baseball Dating Guide indicates that the jersey dates from 1926 to 1933. While it's uncertain whether it's a softball or baseball uniform, research found that Henry Johnson's son Lowell was a member of an early Scandia kitten ball team, and articles also mention Rueben Johnson, possibly Henry's brother.

1932: The first mention of any kitten ball or softball leagues near Scandia identified during this research was in 1932.⁴¹ A Scandia team was part of the Chisago Lakes League, which included teams from Center City, Forest Lake, Lindstrom, Bayport and Wyoming.⁴² According to a *Stillwater Post-Messenger* article, Scandia went on to win the overall league championship,⁴³ and articles mention Lowell and Rueben Johnson as the ace pitchers for the season.

1935: In 1935, the nearby city of Forest Lake, a later rival of Scandia, was in the SERA (State Emergency Relief Administration) League that year with teams from Hugo, Center City, Lindstrom, Chisago City, Wyoming, Taylors Falls, and Panola (an historic hamlet that is now part of Scandia).⁴⁴

1939: In May 1939, a six-team kitten ball league was formed in the Forest Lake area consisting of the Valenty Cowboys, Pepin Oilers, Mattson Clothiers, Hendrickson's Bar, Gamble Store Gamboliers, and the Times Printers.⁴⁵ By mid-season, articles reference Lester Benson as pitching for the Gamboliers, but he is *not* included in a list of players published in a May 25, 1939, *Forest Lake Times* article at the start of the season. (The list includes Oscar Peterson, manager; and players Harold Moen, E.J. Houle, Laurence Thurnbeck, Willard Bergerson, Fred Hauble, Maurice Boehm, Ernie Moen, Don Elwell, George Thurnbeck, John Israelson, Alton Cramer, and Paul Cramer.)⁴⁶

In a June 1939 *Forest Lake Times* article, Benson is credited as pitching for a Scandia team. The article reports that a team made up of stars from six commercial teams from Forest Lake beat a team from Scandia, 3-2. The article mentions Scandia's pitcher, Lester Benson, as putting on a fine exhibition.⁴⁷ Perhaps this is what led the Gamboliers to pick up Benson as their pitcher the next month.

In July, Benson starts pitching for the Gamboliers. A *Forest Lake Times* article says, "the Gamboliers surprised everyone by upsetting the first half champs, the Pepin Oilers, 10 to 3. The

⁴¹ *Stillwater Post-Messenger*, "Scandia K. B. Team Defeats Center City," August 3, 1932, Page 1.

⁴² *Forest Lake Times*, "F.L. K-Ball Team Play Scandia Sunday," August 25, 1932, Page 1.

⁴³ *Stillwater post-Messenger*, "Scandia Team Wins League Pennant, August 31, 1932, Page 1.

⁴⁴ *Forest Lake Times*, "Soft Ball League Takes Linstrom's Measure 11-3," June 20, 1935, page 1 and "Forest Lake Loses Second Game," August 15, 1935, page 1. Note: newspapers do not mention why SERA was funding a softball league, and it was beyond the scope of this research to look into further, but these funds were part of the Federal New Deal of the 1930s.

⁴⁵ *Forest Lake Times*, "New Kitten Ball League Formed With Six Teams," May 18, 1939, page 6.

⁴⁶ *Forest Lake Times*, "Cowboys, Oilers, Clothiers Win Opening Games," May 25, 1939, page 1.

⁴⁷ *Forest Lake Times*, "Kitten Ball Team Beats Scandia by 3 to 3 Score," June 22, 1939, page 5.

Gamboliers reversal of form was due largely to the efforts of Lester Benson, their pitcher, whom they used for the first time.”⁴⁸

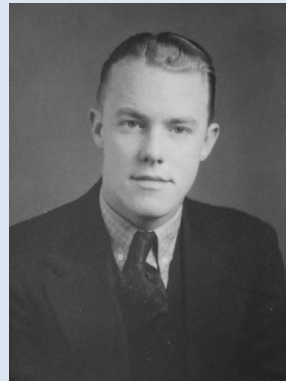
Later in July, the paper reports that the Gamboliers took possession of first place in the Forest Lake league, stating, “Monday night Lester Benson pitched his Gamble store mates to a 3-1 victory over Mattsons, in the best pitchers battle of the season.”⁴⁹

Another team, the Forest Lake All-Stars kittenball team, was mentioned in the *Forest Lake Times* as continuing its undefeated season by beating a good Saint Paul team called Corn Cob Nicks. The Saint Paul team was undefeated, and Lester Benson held them to just three hits.⁵⁰

Benson was chosen as an all-star in August to go up against the season champion Valenty Cowboys.⁵¹ It is likely a team from Scandia was also playing, with Benson as its pitcher, but no newspaper articles were found referencing this team.

1940: By the next year, 1940, a league was formed called the Friendly Valley League and included a team from Scandia, as well as the local communities mentioned above. In May 1940, Scandia and Forest Lake played each other.⁵²

At the start of the 1940 season, Forest Lake’s softball team defeated St. Croix Falls and Scandia in



Lester “Lefty” Benson, as he was known, went on to be a phenomenal pitcher for Scandia. He grew up in Scandia and graduated from Forest Lake High School in 1938.

Lester’s son, Greg – who later played fastpitch for the Scandia team himself -- recalls his dad’s “orthodox” pitching style, also known as modified fastpitch. It is an underhand pitching motion that delivers the ball in a straight or flat line. It is not as fast as windmill pitches of contemporary fastpitch -- and slower than arc-based pitches of slowpitch. Greg also recalls that his dad was very athletic and enjoyed softball more than the fast pace of baseball.¹

Ninety-six-year-old Dick Bjorkman faced Benson on the mound in the late 1940s while playing for Lindstrom. “I may be the oldest man living who has hit a pitch thrown by Lefty Benson,” said Bjorkman in a 2025 interview. “Lefty was not a snap pitcher. But he could throw hard and fast. The ball would come like a bullet. There was only a second or two to see if he was throwing a riser or a sinker. The riser was almost impossible to hit. ... Maybe because I could get hits off of Lefty, Scandia asked me to play for them.”

⁴⁸ *Forest Lake Times*, All-Stars Win Two Games, July 6, 1939, page 1 and 8.

⁴⁹ *Forest Lake Times*, “Gamboliers Take KB League Lead,” August 3, 1939, page 1.

⁵⁰ *Forest Lake Times*, “All-Stars Win Two Games,” July 6, 1939, page 1.

⁵¹ *Forest Lake times*, “K-Ball Climax To See Valentys Play All-Stars,” August 24, 1939, page 1.

⁵² *Forest Lake Times*, “Soft Ball Team is Favorite in League,” May 30, 1940, page 1.

a pre-season round robin, but lost to Dresser Junction.⁵³ Both Scandia and Forest Lake were in the playoff picture in this early season of the Friendly Valley League.⁵⁴ Scandia made it to the 16th Annual State Tournament in 1940 at Dunning Field in St. Paul. A total of eight teams competed in the Class A Tournament (for cities under 10,000 in population): Evan, Gilbert, Hastings, North Mankato, Scandia, South Saint Paul, Red Wing, Wilmar.⁵⁵

In June 1940, the *Forest Lake Times* ran an article on the rise of softball and why it was becoming more popular, especially in communities outside the Twin Cities. The article states:

“The best thing about softball as a recreational sport lies in the fact that one needn’t be an expert to play it. Teams range through all degrees of ability and there are leagues in which the players almost all are oldsters who are required to take practically no physical risk to get their enjoyable recreation and exercise”.

Other reasons for the rise of softball included low cost, use of any lot, volunteer officials, and the practice of sponsors for uniforms or equipment, which was limited to a couple of bats and balls.⁵⁶

1941: Scandia’s softball leagues were affected by World War II, which was raging in Europe. In July 1941, the Scandia softball team was undefeated with pitcher “Lefty” Benson; however, in August, the star pitcher was drafted by the Army.⁵⁷ There were no mentions of a softball team in Scandia for the years 1942 to 1945, likely due to many others being drafted to serve in the war efforts.



Lester Benson in France during World War II.

⁵³ *Forest Lake Times*, “Soft Ball Team is Favorite in League,” May 30, 1940, page 1.

⁵⁴ *Forest Lake Times*, “Softball Team Wins Position in Playoff,” August 29, 1940, page 1.

⁵⁵ *Duluth News Tribune*, “Draw Announced For State D-ball Tourney At St. Paul,” August 29, 1940, page 13.

⁵⁶ *Forest Lake Times*, “The Sporting Thing by George Edmond,” June 6, 1940, page 7.

⁵⁷ *Forest Lake Times*, “Softball Demons Win Two, Meet Prisoners Sunday,” July 24, 1941, page 4 and “Softball Team Meets Hastings To Open Tourney,” August 28, 1941, page 1.

1944-1945: There were other local teams playing during World War II, including the Forest Lake team, which was in a league in 1944.⁵⁸ In 1945, the Chisago Softball Leagues included Chisago City, Almelund, Panola, Taylors Falls, Lindstrom, and Forest Lake.⁵⁹

1946: A Scandia team re-entered the softball scene in 1946 as part of the Chisago Lakes Softball League, which included seven other teams: Forest Lake, Chisago City, Dresser Junction, Lindstrom, Taylors Falls, Almelund, and Panola.⁶⁰ Scandia made it to the state tournament but lost to both Chisholm and Cloquet.⁶¹



Left: Lester and Muriel Benson with son Greg. Right: Stanley and Sibbie Sandquist. Both photos courtesy Sandquist Family.

A 1966 Scandia Tournament Program story about the history of the Scandia team (see Appendix) credits Benson and Stanley Sandquist as starting the Scandia team in 1949. According to his obituary, Sandquist had also served during WWII, in the United States Army Air Corps. He and Benson were clearly friends from before the war, with a 1941 gossip column in the *Forest Lake Times* telling of an outing to the St. Paul Carnival with the two of them and their future wives – Muriel Johnson (later married to Lester) and Sibbie Ahlm (later married to Sandquist).⁶²



Softball artifacts from early player Stanley Sandquist (facemask and glove).

⁵⁸ *Forest Lake Times*, "Rangers Last Game," May 24, 1944, page 6.

⁵⁹ *Forest Lake Times*, "Forest Lake Holds Lead in Softball League," July 19, 1945, page 1.

⁶⁰ *Forest Lake Times*, "Softball League Is Organized," May 2, 1946, page 11.

⁶¹ *Forest Lake Times*, "Scandia," September 5, 1946, page 8.

⁶² *Forest Lake Times*, "Scandia," February 6, 1941, page 7.

1947: The next year in 1947, a new team from Marine on St. Croix entered the league, which along with Scandia and Forest Lake played on fields that were planned to be lighted in Forest Lake; however, the lights were delayed until the following year. “Lefty” Benson, back from the war, served as president of the league.⁶³ Scandia once again made it to the state tournament, but fell to Hopkins and Hampton.⁶⁴

1948: The 1948 *Forest Lake Times* is not available online, but other newspapers covered the 1948 state softball tournament in St. Cloud. Over 900 players play on 53 teams, demonstrating the sport’s growing popularity.⁶⁵ Scandia played Deeplaven in the first round of Class A, losing 5-0; however, they came back through the losing bracket to beat Montevideo 2-1 to play St. Louis Park in the consolation game.⁶⁶ Scandia lost the consolation game, 8-7.⁶⁷

1949: A new league called the Tri-County Softball League formed in 1949, with eight teams from Wyoming, Hugo, Centerville, Garen-Columbus, Lake Netta-Soderville, Cook Lake, and two teams from Forest Lake. That same year, lights were finally installed at the Forest Lake Schumacher Field, which was built in 1948.⁶⁸

Around this time, efforts began to raise funds to purchase property and install pole lights on a dedicated ballfield in Scandia. Team boosters presented a comedy drama at Goose Lake School and at the Marine Village Hall. The performance was directed by Jim Berglund and Lester Benson, the originator of the Scandia softball team. Other members of the troupe included Phil Anderson, catcher for the Scandia team, and Benson’s wife Muriel.



Photo from the newspaper covering fundraising efforts of Scandia residents. Forest Lake Times, “Scandia Actors Perform for Benefit of Softball Team,” May 12, 1949, page 9.

⁶³ *Forest Lake Times*, “Three Softball Teams to Play Home League Contests Here,” April 17, 1947, page 1, *Forest Lake Times*, “Forest Lake-Marine Tonight; No Night Ball Here This Year,” June 5, 1947, page 9.

⁶⁴ *Forest Lake Times*, “‘Old Reliable’ Softballers,” September 4, 1947, page 10.

⁶⁵ *Star Tribune*, “900 S-ball Players in St. Cloud Meet,” September 4, 1948, page 12.

⁶⁶ *Star Tribune*, “State S-ball Meet Results,” September 5, 1948, page 22, *The Minneapolis Star*, “All St. Paul S-ball State Finals Sunday,” September 7, 1948, page 28.

⁶⁷ *The Minneapolis Star*, “Sports Results,” September 13, 1948, page 27

⁶⁸ *Forest Lake Times*, “Softball League Formed; Will Play under Forest Lake Lights, April 21, 1949, page 1

The team was successful in raising the needed funds – impressive for a town of about 900 residents at the time. Phil Berglund, manager of the Scandia team, and the players did most of the construction work themselves,⁶⁹ with Scandia's lights installed by June 1949. A couple weeks later, the Scandia team was playing an exhibition game under their new lights against Minnesota Mining and Gustavus Adolphus Church.⁷⁰ Even though Scandia played more games using the lighted fields at night, it did not give them enough practice to qualify for the state tournament, in which they had competed the previous three years in a row.⁷¹

The 1950s

1950: The year 1950 marks the first time there was enough interest in softball to have two teams in two different leagues. One Scandia team, composed of “seniors” continued to be part of the Friendly Valley League along with four teams from Stillwater: Hilltop Tavern, Carlson Bros., Texaco, and Grains-Crossroads.⁷²

Scandia also had a group of “youngsters” who wanted to play, so they entered a new team to play in the Tri-County Softball League, along with teams from Hugo, Centerville, Coon Lake, Columbus, Wyoming, and two teams from Forest Lake.⁷³

Scandia was unbeaten in the first half of the Friendly Valley league season, with Benson as their ace pitcher. Unfortunately, the same could not be said for the Scandia team in the Tri-County Softball league, which had a losing record.⁷⁴

Watching games in Scandia was the thing to do on any given evening. The *Forest Lake Times* reported in June that the Scandia team in the Friendly Valley League had “been drawing tremendous crowds to home softball games,” with over 1,500 fans attending a game (well over the population of Scandia at the time). Larger cities like Stillwater did not draw nearly the same number of spectators.⁷⁵ The All-Star game for the Friendly Valley League was held in Scandia,

⁶⁹ *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia Actors Perform For Benefit of Softball Team,” May 12, 1949, page 9; “Scandia Lights Now in Use,” June 9, 1949, page 16.

⁷⁰ *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia Slipping in Softball League,” June 23, 1949, page 13.

⁷¹ *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia Loses Playoff Finale,” September 8 1949, page 16.

⁷² *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia again in softball league,” April 6, 1950, page 16.

⁷³ *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia has team in Tri-County softball league,” April 27, 1950, page 9.

⁷⁴ *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia unbeaten, takes league lead,” June 1, 1950, page 16.

⁷⁵ *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia remains team to beat,” June 29, 1950, page 16.

not only because its team was unbeaten, but also because the crowd sizes provided a better financial turn.⁷⁶

Unfortunately, the second half of the season was not as successful for the Friendly Valley League Scandia team. They lost to the Carlson Bros. Texico team from Stillwater, forcing a playoff for entry to the state tournament, which Scandia lost.⁷⁷

1951: At the start of the 1951 season, a joint Scandia/Stillwater team was formed to participate in the St. Paul Classic League. The team was composed of 15 top-ranked players and was sponsored by the Stillwater Softball Association.⁷⁸

The Tri-County Softball League was reorganized with six teams playing for 15 weeks under the lights of Forest Lake and Scandia. The towns represented were Scandia, Hugo, Coon Lake, Garen-Columbus, and Forest Lake with two teams (Jaycees and Bachelors).⁷⁹ By mid-June, Scandia was in first place in this league.⁸⁰ In August, the Tri-County Softball league Scandia team remained in first place and was in a playoff to go to the state tournament.⁸¹ Scandia only lost one game during the season but unfortunately, the team lost the best of three against the Garen-Columbus Flyers, who later went to the state tournament and lost against Anoka.⁸²

A Scandia team also participated in the Friendship Valley League out of Stillwater, but little newspaper coverage could be found about the season. By June of 1951, the Scandia team was in third place.⁸³

1952-1954: By the next season, the Tri-County League was dissolved for lack of interest from other towns, so Forest Lake and Scandia joined the Chisago Lakes Softball League.⁸⁴ In addition to these two teams, the league was filled out with teams from Chisago Lakes, Harris, Almelund, Center City, and North Branch.⁸⁵ At the end of the first half of the 1952 season, Scandia was top of the table again and won the right to host the All-Star games.⁸⁶ Scandia continued to dominate the league and went to the state tournament. The team went through the

⁷⁶ Forest Lake Times, "All-star game at Scandia tonight," July 20, 1950, page 12.

⁷⁷ Forest Lake Times, "Scandia loses league finale," September 7, 1950, page 16.

⁷⁸ Forest Lake Times, "Fast Company," April 19, 1951, page 17.

⁷⁹ Forest Lake Times, "Six-team softball league organized," May 3, 1951, page 9.

⁸⁰ Forest Lake Times, "Bachelors; Thompson Hurls no-hitter," June 14, 1951, page 9.

⁸¹ Forest Lake Times, "Softball Playoff Produces Fireworks," August 23, 1951, page 16.

⁸² Forest Lake Times, "Flyers Wing K-ball Crown, Lose in State," September 6, 1951, page 12.

⁸³ Forest Lake Times, "Scandia third in F.V. league," June 21, 1951, page 16.

⁸⁴ Forest Lake Times, "Forest Lake, Scandia in Chisago K-ball league," May 15, 1952, page 16.

⁸⁵ Forest Lake Times, "Lakers near cellar in league batting," June 12, 1952, page 16.

⁸⁶ Forest Lake Times, "Softball All-star game at Scandia," July 17, 1952, page 16.

first round with ease as the Hopkins team forfeited. The second round was not as easy, and the Scandia team lost to New Brighton, 3-0.⁸⁷ At the end of 1952, the *Forest Lake Times* reported that interest in softball was declining over the last few years in the tri-county area after the post-WWII boom era in 1947 to 1949. Local supporters hoped the 1953 state tournament in nearby Anoka would encourage more teams to participate next season.⁸⁸ It did not seem to work. Scandia only had one team in the Church Softball League in 1953.⁸⁹ The next year in 1954, the only mention of a Scandia team was for the All-Star game, where shortstop Johnson (no first name listed) hit the game winning homerun against Stillwater Carlson's team.⁹⁰

1955: The only mention of Scandia softball in 1955 was for the Junior Church League. Scandia was in last place in that league in July; however, later in the season, Scandia's fastpitch team's trip to the state softball tournament was covered in the *Forest Lake Times*.⁹¹ The Chisago Lakes League must have occurred during the 1955 season but was not covered by the local paper. Scandia clinched its right to play in the Class A state tournament by defeating Chisago Lakes Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) team 2-0. The *Forest Lake Times* states that Scandia's young star pitcher, Wayne Erickson, "pitched perfect ball – no hits, no walks." Scandia went 26-1 for the season but lost their opener game in the state tournament to Spring Lake Park.⁹²

1956: By 1956, articles on the Chisago Lakes Softball League, of which Scandia was a part, returned to the local newspaper. A new Forest Lake team defeated the defending champions of Scandia in the season opener. The new team was sponsored by L & S Service of Forest Lake and consisted of Forest Lake and Coon Lake softball players.⁹³ Scandia once again went to the Class A state tournament as champions of the league. Scandia won their first round 4-3 in a thrilling 16-inning battle with Spring Lake Park, but lost in the next round to Cloquet, 11-0.⁹⁴

1957: Scandia was in the Tri-County Softball League for the 1957 season with teams from Forest Lake, Almelund, North Branch, Coon Lake, and Harris.⁹⁵ There were 38 teams participating in the state tournament played in Bloomington. Scandia represented the Class A

⁸⁷ *Forest Lake Times*, "Scandia loses in state S-ball," September. 4, 1952, page 16.

⁸⁸ *Forest Lake Times*, "Softball interest due for spurt?," November 27, 1952, page 12.

⁸⁹ *Forest Lake Times*, "Hugo still unbeaten in Jr. League," and "Friendly Valley League Standings," July 9, 1953, page 16.

⁹⁰ *Forest Lake Times*, "Scandia player's homer wins for K-Ball stars," July 29, 1954, page 14.

⁹¹ *Forest Lake Times*, "Junior Church League Standings," July 21, 1955, page 13.

⁹² *Forest Lake Times*, "Scandia bows in state softball meet; end season with 26 wins, two losses," September 8, 1955, page 11.

⁹³ *Forest Lake Times*, "New L&S softball team trips Scandia," June 7, 1956, page 7.

⁹⁴ *Forest Lake Times*, "Scandia bows out in S-ball quarter-finals," September 6, 1956, page 9.

⁹⁵ *Forest Lake Times*, "FL wins softball opener," June 6, 1957, page 10.

division with a first round bout against Wilmar.⁹⁶ Scandia lost this first round and no mention of additional games the team played was found in the newspapers.⁹⁷

1958: Coverage for the 1958 season in the local paper was sparse, with a mention in August regarding Scandia's participation in a tournament in Harris.⁹⁸ The first mention of softball was in September when Scandia was once again the Friendly Valley Softball League entrant for the state tournament. The tournament was held in Hibbing. Scandia defeated Chatfield in the opener 6-0 and defeated Fairmont 5-3 to make it to the semifinals.⁹⁹ The article, however, did not mention their opponent or score. Teams from Austin and Cloquet are listed as Men's Fastpitch Champions in 1958.¹⁰⁰

1959: For the last year of the decade, coverage of the Friendly Valley Softball League was sparse. In September, the *Forest Lake Times* covered the state tournament. Scandia was once again the Friendly Valley entrant to the tournament in Hibbing, Minnesota, and reached the semi-finals. Ultimately, they lost to a strong team from Worthington, 6-0. Wayne Erickson pitched six innings and gave up four runs. The Worthington pitcher had a better showing, pitched a no-hit game. Scandia had drafted Hugh Rose and Jim Junker from the Len's Grain Belt team of Stillwater. The article also states that "a large number of Scandia fans followed the team to the tourney."¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ *Minneapolis Star*, "38 S-ball Teams In Rec Tourney," August 30, 1957, page 32.

⁹⁷ *Star Tribune*, "No-hitter for Hibbing," September 1, 1957, page 20.

⁹⁸ *Forest Lake Times*, "Scandia in Harris softball Tournament August 21, 1958, page 3.

⁹⁹ *Forest Lake times*, "Scandia loses in state S-ball semi's," September 10, 1959, page 12.

¹⁰⁰ 1958 ASA State Champions, <https://softballhistorymn.com/category/1958/>, accessed May 5, 2025.

¹⁰¹ *Forest Lake Times*, "Scandia loses in state S-ball semi's," September 10, 1959, page 12.

The 1960s and the Rise of Wayne Erickson



The Scandia team, ca. early 1960s

In the 1960s, the Scandia fastpitch team transformed into a formidable statewide competitor, building on a decade of intermittent state tournament appearances. This success was fueled by key figures like veteran catcher Phil Anderson, who began his career in 1946 at age 19 alongside Lester Benson. Phil's influence extended to recruiting and mentoring Wayne Erickson in the 1950s. By the early 1960s, Wayne was a prominent player, often playing four or five nights a week for various teams, as recalled by his daughters Linda, Lynette, and Debra.

Doniver Ahlm, a future Scandia Hall of Famer, remembers following Scandia softball as a kid. "Wayne was a hero. I remember he gave me his glove to take home. I was so excited to have Wayne Erickson's Glove. Another time, Wayne gave me a brand-new Willson softball." Later when Doniver played for a Marine on St. Croix team against Erickson, he said, "I couldn't hit a changeup, and he knew it. In most cases, I would strike out. I did get him once when I hit an inside-the-park home run. We won 2-1."¹⁰² Wayne Erickson was a great pitcher, which drew good players to the team."

¹⁰² Video Interview, Doniver Ahlm, Greg Benson, Jim Lindgren, June 3, 2025.

Jim Lindgren states, “People wanted to come to a winning team, and players were easily recruited to play with Scandia because of really good pitching. Wayne was a phenomenal pitcher in his day.”¹⁰³

Other key players during this decade included Joe Junker and Dean Carlson, both of whom made the All-Star Tournament team in 1963, along with Wayne and Phil. Greg Benson emerged as a strong hitter known for his home runs – with his winning hits at the 1968 State Tournament earning him a spot with Erickson on the All-Star Team. The 1966 Scandia Invitational Tournament program touted Stillwater native Dave Junker – playing his third year in Scandia – as the “best third-baseman in the league,” noting his better-than .400 average in over 70 games.

1960: First mention in 1960 of Scandia’s team came in August in a *Forest Lake Times* article about the season championship of the Friendly Valley Softball League. Scandia battled Len’s Grain Belts of Stillwater, which had won the first half of the season with a 9-0 record. Scandia won the second half with a 9-1 record, with the only loss coming from the Stillwater team.¹⁰⁴ Scandia won the series and was once again the Friendly Valley League entrant to the state tournament. This year, Scandia moved to the Class AA level – competing against larger cities of over 10,000 residents – and represented themselves well. Scandia defeated Anoka 10-1, and in the next round, defeated Rochester 4-1. The quarterfinal meeting with South St. Paul did not go as well, as Scandia lost 1-0. South Saint Paul won the Class AA tournament.¹⁰⁵

Class A and Class AA: What Does This Mean?

In the earlier decades, Class A included small towns under 10,000 in population, and Class AA was for larger cities. However, Scandia was competing so well in the Class A division and dominating its small-town opponents that it was decided to move them to the Class AA to compete with the larger cities.

Later in the 1980s and 1990s, divisions were based on how competitive a team was, adding B and C divisions. Scandia would continue to do well in the many classes of play.

¹⁰³ Video Interview, Doniver Ahlm, Greg Benson, Jim Lindgren, June 3, 2025.

¹⁰⁴ *Forest Lake Times*, “Big softball game in Scandia tonight,” August 25, 1960, page 5.

¹⁰⁵ *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia wins pair in state S-ball tourney,” September 8, 1960, page 6.

The article also touted young pitcher Wayne Erickson as one of the “comers” in softball hurling ranks. After pitching for Minneapolis’s Maurer’s Bar in the Harris tournament and bringing them a win, Erickson was awarded the “Red” Hokanson trophy as the outstanding player of the tournament.¹⁰⁶



*Wayne Erickson on left, with the Maurer's Bar Team.
Courtesy Wayne Erickson's personal collection.*

1961 and 1962: In 1961, a new league named the St. Croix Valley League was formed with teams from the south Chisago and north Washington county areas that included Forest Lake, Scandia, Almelund, North Branch, Sunrise, and Harris.¹⁰⁷ Each team played 15 games and, at the end of the season, the top four clubs had playoffs to determine which went to the state tournament. The article also mentions that Scandia will have its major team in the Stillwater League.¹⁰⁸ The local papers did not print any more news stories regarding softball in 1961, not even the state tournament coverage, nor for 1962. Other sources list teams from Hibbing and Hastings as the champions for 1961 and a team from Cloquet as the champion in 1962.¹⁰⁹ A 1966 program for the Scandia Invitational Tournament states that Phil Anderson was awarded the “Red Hokanson” Award for most valuable player in the 1962 Harris Tournament.

¹⁰⁶ *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia wins pair in state S-ball tourney,” September 8, 1960, page 6.

¹⁰⁷ *Forest Lake Times*, “Softball league play opens June 5,” May 18, 1961, page 6.

¹⁰⁸ *Forest Lake Times*, “FL has team in softball league,” April 27, 1961, page 6.

¹⁰⁹ 1961 ASA State Champions, <https://softballhistorymn.com/category/1961/>, accessed May 5, 2025; 1962 ASA State Champions, <https://softballhistorymn.com/category/1962/>, accessed May 6, 2025.

1963: In August of 1963, Scandia competed with 24 other teams in the tenth annual Harris Invitational to reclaim their title from 1958.¹¹⁰ Erickson pitched 28 innings, gave up two runs, and struck out 49 batters.¹¹¹

Just one month later, Erickson pitched Scandia to a Class A state championship. Erickson pitched one no-hitter. In two games he faced only 21 hitters, and in two others he only faced 22 hitters. For the whole tournament, Erickson only allowed one run. Wayne Erickson was named most valuable player for the 1963 state tournament.¹¹² However they lost to the Duluth AA champions 1-0 in twelve innings, in the overall playoff to decide who went to the regional meet in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.¹¹³ Scandia players Phil Anderson, Wayne Erickson, Dean Carlson, and Joe Junker were voted to the 1963 All-State Tournament Team.¹¹⁴



Photo courtesy the Wayne Erickson collection.

¹¹⁰ *Forest Lake Times*, "Scandia will defend Harris title," August 8, 1963, page 6.

¹¹¹ *Forest Lake Times*, "Scandia wins third Harris Invitational," August 27, 1964, page 14.

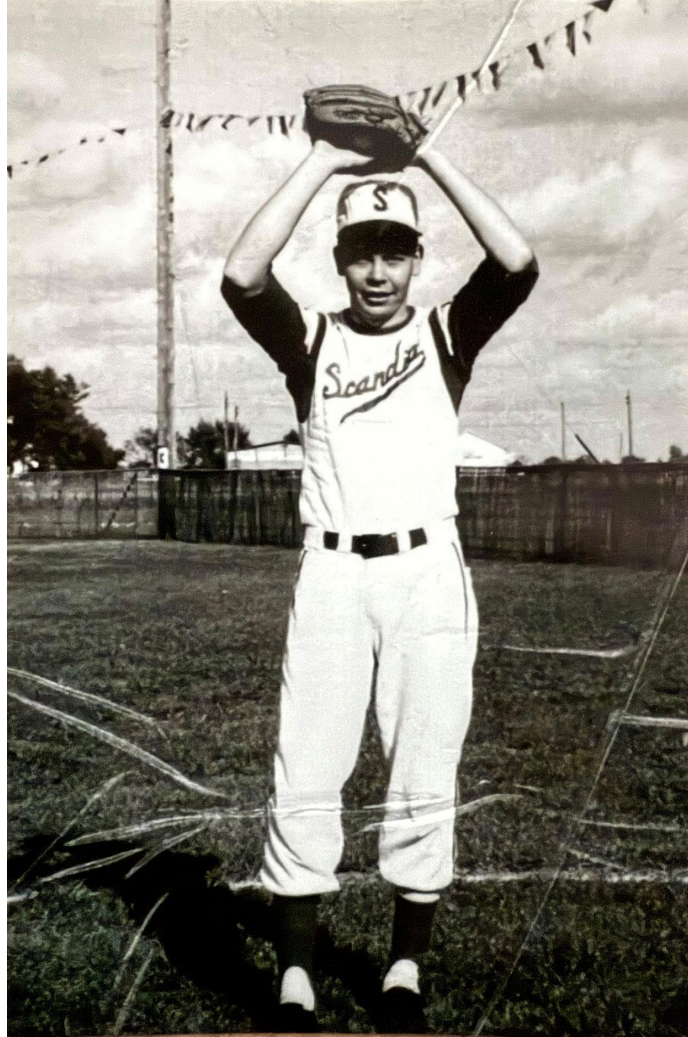
¹¹² *Forest Lake Times*, "Wayne Erickson pitches Scandia to state Class A championship," September 5, 1963, page 7.

¹¹³ *Minneapolis Star*, "Duluth Defeats Scandia 1-0," September 3, 1963, page 36.

¹¹⁴ Scandia Invitational Softball Tournament printed program, pages 2, 4, and 10. Available from Scandia Heritage Alliance archives.



Wayne Erickson and Phil Anderson, circa 1966.
Courtesy the Wayne Erickson collection.



William Huff, the younger brother of a pitcher from a different team, watched Wayne Erickson and the Scandia team play in the 1960s and 1970s. He states "They were a force. I saw them play numerous times. And whether it be softball or baseball, it all starts with pitching. Wayne Erickson was a true phenomenon and the force that drove that Scandia team."

Wayne Erickson, circa 1966, from Erickson's personal collection.

1964: Erickson and Scandia's softball team's dominance continued the following year. In June, Scandia won the Sixth Annual Owatonna Softball Tournament that saw 35 teams from central and southern Minnesota play in a three-day tournament. Scandia won against the Rochester Eagles in a ten-inning 1-0 shutout. Erickson once again did much of the work, pitching 47 of the 49 innings played. He gave up one run and struck out 54 batters.¹¹⁵ The next month, Scandia was runner-up in a five-state tournament that included 28 teams from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Erickson pitched for 35 innings, gave up 18 hits, and struck out 56 batters.¹¹⁶ Scandia lost to Peter Packers from Eau Claire 3-0. Four of the players –

¹¹⁵ *Forest Lake Times*, "Scandia wins Owatonna tourney," June 25, 1964, page 9.

¹¹⁶ *Forest Lake Times*, "Scandia runner-up in five-state tourney," July 9, 1964, page 9.

Erickson, Phil Anderson, Dave “Choc” Junker, and Joe “Dutz” Junker – were named to the all-tournament team.

In mid-July, Scandia defended and retained its title in the Twin Point Invitational. Once again, Erickson shined as he gave up only one run, seven hits, and struck out 45 men in 28 innings. In the Friendly Valley League, Erickson pitched his second perfect game of the season and was close to securing the title.¹¹⁷ Scandia earned their spot in the 1964 state tournament by defeating Twin Point of Lake Elmo twice, making it the team’s eighth trip to the state tournament.¹¹⁸



Newspaper clipping from the Wayne Erickson scrapbook, 1964.

Scandia was back in the Class AA bracket for the 1964 state tournament, once again playing teams from larger cities. In the first round, Scandia defeated Hibbing 6-2 but fell to Bloomington

¹¹⁷ *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia retains Twin Point title, defeats St. Paul’s top hurlers,” July 16, 1964, page 7.

¹¹⁸ *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia clinches state softball spot,” August 20, 1964, page 15.

5-2 in the second round.¹¹⁹ Duluth won the AA finals and Hastings the A finals. Duluth won the state title over Hastings.¹²⁰

1965: In 1965, the Friendly Valley Softball League consisted of 10 teams, including Scandia, River Falls, Harris, Marine, and Meisters from Stillwater.¹²¹ Scandia once again won the Friendly Valley League with victories over Marine on St. Croix and Twin Point of Lake Elmo.¹²² Scandia won its first round of the Class AA state tournament against Virginia 9-0 but was defeated 2-1 in the second round against Winona.¹²³

The Marine on St. Croix team was made up of young players from around Scandia, who were occasionally playing with Scandia but not enough to hone their skills. Doniver Ahlm, Greg Benson, and Jim Lindberg decided to form a team in Marine and began to improve their skills. According to the trio during interviews, they retained a sponsor, played lots of games, and improved. By August of 1965, the team was good enough to split games with the Scandia team in the Friendly Valley league playoffs. Marine even managed to get seven hits off of Erickson at the Harris Tournament, and pitcher Jim Lindberg limited Scandia to just one hit.¹²⁴

According to Doniver Ahlm, “I looked at Marine as a farm team for Scandia. We were good in our own right and beat Scandia, but not so good the first couple of years. But the Scandia manager was watching and would see, well, who do we wanna recruit?”¹²⁵

Jim Lindgren states, “We beat Scandia to get into the state tournament one year, and people in Scandia did not like it.” After a few seasons, the trio joined the Scandia team and helped create a team that soon dominated the league and state tournaments.

1966: The 1966 Friendly Valley Softball League consisted of 11 teams, adding Hastings and New Richmond. Minimum Security Unit (Minnies), Meisters and Pla-Mor (Stillwater), River Falls, Twin Point, Scandia, Marine on St. Croix, The Go-Getters of Lake Elmo, and Sand Bar of Lakeland.¹²⁶ Scandia participated in many tournaments in 1966 where they advanced to the championship game for the Red Wing Softball tournament by beating teams from Northfield and

¹¹⁹ *Star Tribune*, “Scandia, Heights lose in State Softball Meet,” Sep 6, 1964, page 26.

¹²⁰ *Star Tribune*, “Duluth Wins State Softball Crown,” Sep 8, 1964, page 30.

¹²¹ *The Prison Mirror*, “Colony Softball,” July 30, 1965, page 4.

¹²² *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia again in state tournament,” August 26, 1965, page 20.

¹²³ *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia beaten 2-1 in state softball meet,” Sep. 9, 1965, page 17.

¹²⁴ *First Lake Times*, “Scandia, Marine split F-V games,” August 19, 1965, page 16.

¹²⁵ Video interview with Doniver Ahlm, Greg Benson, Jim Lindberg, June 3, 2025.

¹²⁶ *The Prison Mirror*, “Minnies,” April 22, 1966, page 4.



Team photo from a 1966 Scandia Invitational Tournament program. See the Appendix for the full program, which includes photos and names of individual players. The bat boys in the front row are brothers Jimmy and David Anderson. Photo courtesy the Wayne Erickson collection.

River Falls.¹²⁷ They also hosted a 16-team invitational softball tourney where they defeated Marine on St Croix 5-0 to win the title.¹²⁸ The team played in the Duluth Softball tournament but lost in the title game to Whitaker Buick of St. Paul.¹²⁹ They won the Lake Elmo tournament against River Falls but lost to Ramsey County in the semi-final round of the State Class AA Softball Tournament.¹³⁰

1967: Scandia clinched the Class AA title in 1967 by defeating Duluth 6-0; however, they did not make the regional tournament because of a loss to the Class A champion, Mountain Lake. Erickson pitched 41 innings over the three-day tournament; and he and Dave “Choc” Junker were named to the All-State Tournament Softball team.¹³¹

1968: Scandia participated in and won the Eau Claire Softball tournament in late July 1968.¹³² In August, Scandia made it to the championship game of the Fort Williams Tournament in Iowa but lost to Waterloo, the Iowa state champion team.¹³³ Scandia once again won the Class AA

¹²⁷ *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia triumphs 3-0 in softball, June 16, 1966, page 19.

¹²⁸ *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia tops Marine for title,” June 23, 1966, page 15.

¹²⁹ *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia loses to Whitaker 8-1 in Duluth title game,” June 30, 1966, page 15.

¹³⁰ *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia loses 2-1 after winning three in state tournament,” September 8, 1966, page 2; *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia wins crown in Lake Elmo tourney,” July 21, 1966, page 17.

¹³¹ *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia blanks Duluth, 6-0, for title in Minnesota Class AA softball tourney,” September 7, 1967, page 17.

¹³² *Forest Lake Times*, “Erickson pitches Scandia to title,” July 25, 1968, page 18.

¹³³ *Forest Lake Times*, “Scandia loses in final game of tournament,” Aug 8, 1968, page 13.

division of the state championship defeating Hibbing 4-1. Greg Benson and Wayne Erickson were instrumental in the wins with a three-run homerun and two-hit pitching, respectively. They were both named to the all-state team.¹³⁴ In September, the team headed to the regional tournament in Fargo, North Dakota. Unfortunately, Scandia went 0-2 in the double elimination tournament.¹³⁵



1968 State Champions, Scandia, part of Wayne Erickson's archives.

1969: Coverage for the 1969 season in the local paper was sparse. The first mention of the team in the *Forest Lake Times* was in September when Scandia finished second in the regional tournament in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Scandia played and defeated teams from Herron,

¹³⁴ Forest Lake Times, "State softball championship goes to Scandia second time," Aug. 29, 1968, page 19.

¹³⁵ Forest Lake Times, "Scandia softballers lose in region play," September 19, 1968, page 14.

South Dakota; Saint Paul; Minneapolis; and Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Scandia lost one game each to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Whitakers Buick of Saint Paul.¹³⁶ The Minneapolis papers had more coverage of the state tournament. Scandia won the Class AA title in Willmar by defeating New Brighton 7-1. Fairmount defeated Lake Lillian for the Class A title. Scandia went on to defeat Fairmount for the tournament's mythical championship. Wayne Erickson, Joe "Dutz" Junker, and Ken Sidebottom of the Scandia team were all named to the all-star tournament team.¹³⁷

In the 1960s, the Scandia team achieved significant success, setting the stage for their continued pursuit of excellence in the subsequent decade.

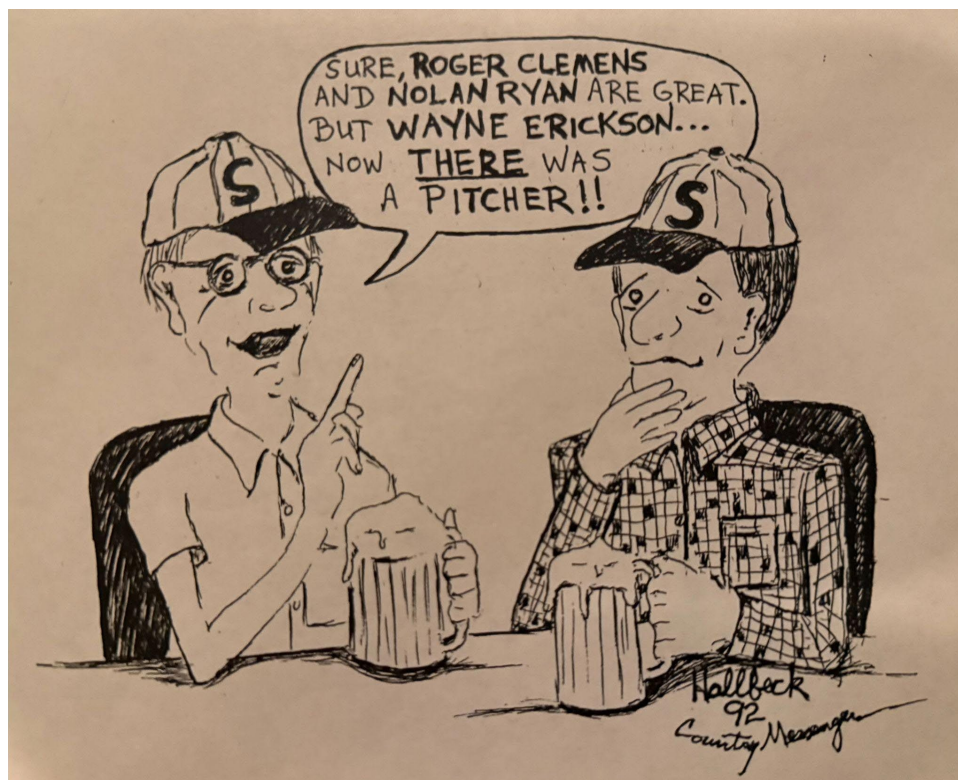


Newspaper clipping from the Wayne Erickson scrapbook archive. The victor of the Class A and Class AA game, known as the Mythical State Title winner, progressed to the regional tournament.

Courtesy the Wayne Erickson Collection.

¹³⁶ *Forest Lake Times*, "Scandia finishes 2nd in Region softball tourney," Sep. 4, 1969, page 15.

¹³⁷ *Minneapolis Star*, "Fast Pitch champs in region meet," Aug. 25, 1969, page 28.



Wayne Erickson cartoon, 1992 from the local Country Messenger newspaper.

The 1970s

The 1970s brought a new generation of Scandia natives to fastpitch softball, including Doniver Ahlm, Greg Benson, and Jim Lindberg, who had been honing their baseball or softball skills since childhood. These "youngsters" quickly made their mark, securing a fourth state tournament title in 1971 and a runner-up finish in 1976. That same year, Scandia qualified for regional play in Duluth, where they etched their name in the record books, though not for a win. In a legendary semi-final game against Mankato, Scandia ultimately lost 2-1 after an astounding 25 innings, all pitched by Lindberg.

1970: Very little coverage occurred in the local newspapers at the start of the 1970s. There was no mention of the state tournament in local newspapers for 1970. Scandia was in the tournament but was defeated by Winona in the Class AA championship game 1-0.¹³⁸

1971: In 1971, Scandia was featured in the local newspapers when they once again won the State Fastpitch tournament Class AA crown in Coon Rapids. Scandia defeated Hastings in the first round, 4-0. The second game the team defeated Austin Moose 4-3, and South Saint Paul 1-

¹³⁸ *Post Bulletin*, "North Star Falls In Softball Meet," Aug 31, 1970, page 30.

0. The championship game was against Mankato, and it went for 8 innings with Scandia winning 2-1. Erickson pitched the two shutouts, and Jim Lindberg pitched the other two games with relief help from Erickson in the Austin game. This was the fourth State win for Scandia in the previous five years.¹³⁹



**1971 Men's State
"A" Fast Pitch Tournament
ST. CROUX VALLEY - SCANDIA PPC**

Front Row: Joel Nelson, Mike Thompson, Jim Lindberg,
Donniver Ahlm, Lee Heinecke.

Second Row: Denny Lofoom, Marlin Thompson, Wayne,
Erickson, Ken Sidebottom, Dave Junker.

Third Row: Phil Anderson, Al Peterson, Mike Altavilla,
Hank Nelson, Don Sequin, Greg Benson, Dave Sandberg.

The 1971 Scandia State Championship team. Courtesy Jim Lindberg.

¹³⁹ *Forest Lake Times*, "Scandia PPC softball team wins state fastpitch crown," August 26, 1971, page 14.

1972: In 1972, Scandia earned an automatic seed to the regional tournament as defending champions. Scandia did not participate in the state tournament because of this automatic bid.¹⁴⁰ There was no other information for this year in local newspapers.

1973: In 1973, Scandia lost to Duluth 6-0 in the Class AA state tournament but earned a spot in the Northern Regional Tournament.¹⁴¹ Greg Benson was named to the twelve-man All-State Tournament team for his fine catching and hitting skills.¹⁴²

1974: In 1974, Scandia defeated Hibbing in the State Fastpitch Class AA Tournament but lost to Fairmont. Their second loss in the double-elimination tournament came against Winona's Oasis Bar.¹⁴³

1975: Scandia participated in the South St. Paul Fastpitch Softball Tournament in June 1975, but lost to Green Terrace of Winona and the second place team.¹⁴⁴ The State Tournament Class A and AA teams from Winona took the State tournament titles and the Oasis Bar defeated Scandia in the first round.¹⁴⁵ The other Winona team, Green Terrace, went on to win the region title with help from Jim Lindberg, the right handed pitcher from Scandia.¹⁴⁶ According to Lindberg, the league allowed teams to draft a limited number of players from other teams.

1976: Scandia placed second in the Class AA Fastpitch Tournament. The team won their first three games defeating teams from West Saint Paul, Duluth, and Hibbing, but lost two games to the eventual state champion West Saint Paul. The second-place finish does guarantee them a spot in the North Central Regional Tournament.¹⁴⁷

Scandia lost their first game in the North Central Regional Tournament Class AA to Byerly's but won both of their loser brackets games against Twins Bar and Galleghers.¹⁴⁸ The final game proved to be a herculean effort. The game against Mankato went for 25 innings, and Jim Lindberg pitched every single inning. Both teams scored in the 15th inning and remained tied

¹⁴⁰ *Post-Bulletin*, "Softball," August 21, 1972, page 41.

¹⁴¹ *Winona Daily News*, "2 Winona teams to state semis before bowing out," Aug 20, 1973, page 9.

¹⁴² *Forest Lake Times*, "Scandia fastpitch team enters region play at Winona," August 23, 1973, page 15.

¹⁴³ *Duluth News Tribune*, "State Softball Tournament," Aug 18, 1974, 28, and The Winona Daily News, "G.T. Wins 2 games in state," Aug 18, 1974, page 24.

¹⁴⁴ *The Winona Daily News*, "Oasis Bar is third in softball tourney," June 9, 1975, page 11.

¹⁴⁵ *Winona Daily News*, "Big 'O', Green Terrace crowned state champs," Aug 11, 1975, page 10.

¹⁴⁶ *Winona Daily News*, "Green Terrace snares region title," Aug 25, 1975, page 10.

¹⁴⁷ *Forest Lake Times*, "Scandia fastpitch team places 2nd in state," August 26, 1976, page 17.

¹⁴⁸ *Duluth News Tribune*, "Scoreboard," August 29, 1976, page 30.

until the bottom of the 25th, when Mankato scored the winning run. Lindberg drove in Doniver Ahlm for Scandia's only run of the game.¹⁴⁹

This game is still talked about and will live in infamy amongst the players that participated. Ahlm is quoted in a 1990s-era program for the Scandia Invitational Tournament in an essay about this game, saying, "Both teams walked off the field to a standing ovation. Because the game lasted six hours, the whole tournament was backed up so bad that the final game ... was not over until 2:30am."¹⁵⁰

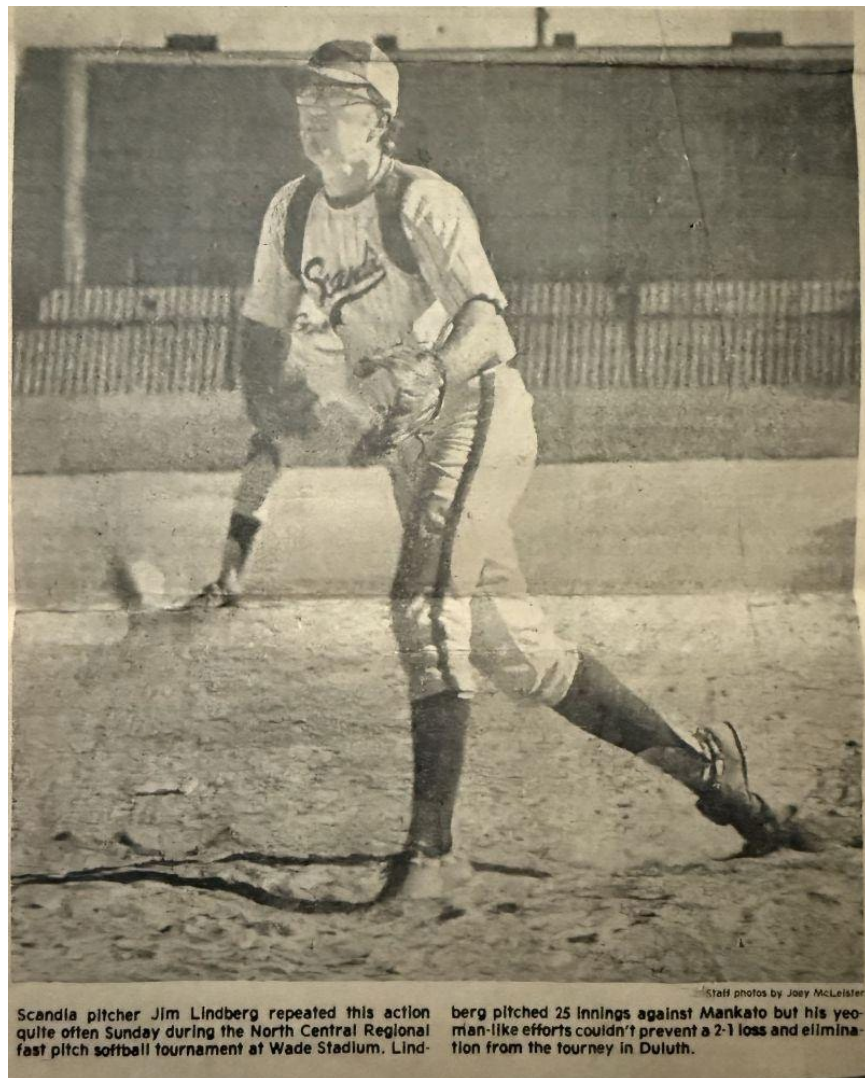


Photo of Jim Lindberg from a Duluth News Tribune article about the State Tournament.

¹⁴⁹ *Duluth News Tribune*, "It's tough to rally after 25 innings," August 30, 1976, page 8.

¹⁵⁰ Scandia Invitational Softball Tournament program, available from Scandia Heritage Alliance archives.

1977: Coverage for the 1977 state tournament was less than previous years. Scandia lost its first game of the tournament to the eventual second-place Class AA team from Austin.¹⁵¹

1978 and 1979: There is no mention of a Scandia team in 1978. The only mention of a softball team from Scandia is the Women's "B" Slow Pitch sponsored by Merchants.¹⁵² The last year of the decade, the Scandia men's fastpitch team was mentioned as being part of the state tournament in St. Paul. However, they lost against a Duluth team, 4-1.¹⁵³



1979 team photo shows a crossover of generations, with young pitcher Greg Isaacson in the front right (17-18 years old), Greg Benson in the back row third from right, and Doniver Ahlm in the front row far left. Front row (L to R): Doniver Ahlm, John Seim, Jeff Berglund, Scott Berglund, Greg Isaacson. Back Row (L to R): Ron Witzel, Joe Koscianski, Garen Engquist, *unknown*, Jerry Smith, Greg Benson, *unknown*, Jim Anderson.

¹⁵¹ *Austin Daily Herald*, "Moose Gain a berth in region meet," August 23, 1977, page 10.

¹⁵² *Duluth News Tribune*, "District 6 softball playoffs set in 3 Classes at Duluth," August 11, 1978, page 17.

¹⁵³ *Duluth News Tribune*, "Charlie's, Mr. J's, Zup's, Jungle Cage still alive," August 19, 1979, page 38.

The 1980s

During the 1980s, Scandia boasted two competitive Men's fastpitch teams in local leagues. The Scandia Ranch sponsored a team in Class A for the majority of the decade, while Molitor Construction, followed by Swenson's Superette, backed a team in Class B, second highest competitive level. The 1980s were a time of rebuilding for the Scandia teams. There were a few veterans from the dominant 1970s teams like Scott Bergland, Dave and Jimmy Anderson, Dave Sandberg, and longtime scorekeeper Garen Engquist provided a solid foundation for the younger players. The Class A team won the 1987 State Tournament behind the arm of Greg Isaacson, a young pitcher mentored by Jim Lindberg.

According to an overview of the 1980s/90s era of play in a Scandia Invitational Tournament Program (year not indicated), Scandia marched through the 1987 state Fastpitch Championships with an undefeated 5-0 record to "bring a state title back to this small town for the first time since 1971." The article adds that Scandia fastpitch thrived behind hitting, pitching and defense of local players such as Dan Lindgren, Joel Nelson, Rick Smith, Richard Quigley, Greg Isaacson, Mitch Thompson, David Miller, and Brian McLaughlin.

The team continued its winning tradition in 1988, winning the Northern Regionals to advance to the National Tournament. Scandia appeared in eight consecutive National Tournaments in the 1980s and 1990s.

1981-1984: Both Scandia teams participated in State tournaments in their respective classes in 1981. Scandia Ranch competed in the 1982 Class A state tournament, facing an early setback in the loser's bracket and missing the championship games.¹⁵⁴ They returned to state competition in 1984, but were defeated by a Duluth team, 6-4.¹⁵⁵

1985: In 1985, more tournaments were covered by newspapers, including the Nirico Construction Men's Fast Pitch Tournament at St. Paul's Dunning Field in June, where Scandia Ranch placed second in the open division, which included any ranked teams, defeating Mankato's Class AA Happy Chef team for the first time.¹⁵⁶ In June, Scandia Ranch participated in the Rice Lake, Wisconsin, Tournament, but lost to Stewart Taylor Printing, taking second place.¹⁵⁷ Scandia's Molitor Construction team won the "Rec" Division in the same tournament.

¹⁵⁴ *Duluth News Tribune*, "Softball," August 23, 1982, page 13.

¹⁵⁵ *Duluth News Tribune*, "Duluth Tire, Charlie's win in state fast pitch," August 19, 1984, page 42.

¹⁵⁶ *Star Tribune*, "Softball," June 08, 1986, page 56.

¹⁵⁷ *Duluth News Tribune*, "Softball," June 16, 1986, page 8.

This same team played in the state tournament's B Division but fell short to Kaph Bros. of Meriden in the 16-team tournament.¹⁵⁸

1987: The 1987 team, Scandia Ranch, was ranked fourth in the state, behind a Mankato team and two Saint Paul teams, in June of that year.¹⁵⁹ A month later, the team traveled to Wisconsin and was the first Minnesota team to participate in the Kaki Lawton Fastpitch Tourney in Portage, Wisconsin. Scandia Ranch won the whole tournament, going undefeated 5-0.¹⁶⁰ Greg Isaacson and Keith Schmidt pitched for a combined earned run of 0.80 for the whole tournament. The Scandia hitters, Larry Chelberg, Mitch Thompson, Jim Liesz, and Brian McLaughlin, were out in force during the tournament, with the four players batting over .400.¹⁶¹

In 1987, the Scandia Ranch team took their first State Title in 16 years at Veterans field in South Saint Paul. The team sailed through their bracket, and in the winner's bracket final came up against West Central Merchants of Lake Lillian and won 5-3. Scandia went unbeaten in the 20-team double-elimination tournament. The team even faced the previous state champion in the semi-finals, Wabasso, and defeated them.

The team waited for the losers' bracket to resolve to see who they faced for the final game of the tournament. The team was the West Central Merchants from Lake Lillian. Scandia took the state title by shutting out West Central Merchants for a score of 6-0. Isaacson and Keith Schmidt led the team to the win with their pitching.

With this win at the state tournament, Scandia qualified for their first National Tournament, which was held in Redding, California.¹⁶² In their initial matchup, Scandia was defeated by Jolly Molly of Pennsylvania, who ultimately claimed the National Championship. Subsequently, Scandia achieved a 3-2 record, securing 17th place in the National Tournament.¹⁶³ Dan Lindgren recalls hearing a player from Jolly Molly mentioning that their most challenging game was against Scandia. Jolly Molly secured a narrow victory with a final score of 3-1."¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁸ *Albert Lea Tribune*, "Kaph team wins regional," August 20, 1986, page 8.

¹⁵⁹ *Star Tribune*, "Softball," June 30, 1987, page 44.

¹⁶⁰ *The Daily Register*, "Scandia wins Kaki Lawton Fastpitch Tourney," July 13, 1987.

¹⁶¹ *Stillwater Gazette*, "Scandia Ranch fast-pitch nine wins tourney," July 15, 1987.

¹⁶² Let's Play Softball, "Scandia takes first state title in 16 years," August 27-28, 1987.

¹⁶³ The Fastpitch Chronicle, "Scandia 88 Season Recap," Vol. 1, No. 5, December 1988.

¹⁶⁴ Recollection from Dan Lindgren, Scandia participant at the Nationals.



Scandia 1987 State Champions.



Lowell and Lois Isaacson with pitcher Greg Isaacson after the 1987 championship game. "My dad was especially proud because it was almost 40 years to the day after he played on the Scandia team with 'Lefty' Benson as a 16-year-old in the 1947 State Tournament with Scandia," says Greg Isaacson.



Scandia Men's National Fastpitch Team. Front row, left to right: Jim Liesz, Kyle Quigley, Dale Schuldts, Keith Schmidt.. Second row, left to right: Brian McLaughlin, Larry Chelberg, Jeff Chelberg, Dan Lindgren, Rich Antel. Third row, left to right: Dave Junker, Greg Schell, Cortney Claflin, Joel Nelson, Garen Engquist, Greg Isaacson, Richard Quigley, Mitch Thompson, Dave Miller.



RUDY PERPICH
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MINNESOTA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ST. PAUL 55155

September 24, 1987

Richard Quigley
Manager
Scandia Men's Fast-Pitch Team
Scandia, Minnesota 55073

Dear Richard:

Congratulations to you and your team for winning the state title last month at the men's fast-pitch tournament in South St. Paul!

I am aware of how much hard work and commitment goes into becoming a first place softball team. I admire you and your players for striving for, and reaching your state title goal.

Best wishes and good luck in seasons to come.

Sincerely,

RUDY PERPICH
Governor

*I played fast pitch for
Many years - (as pitcher).*

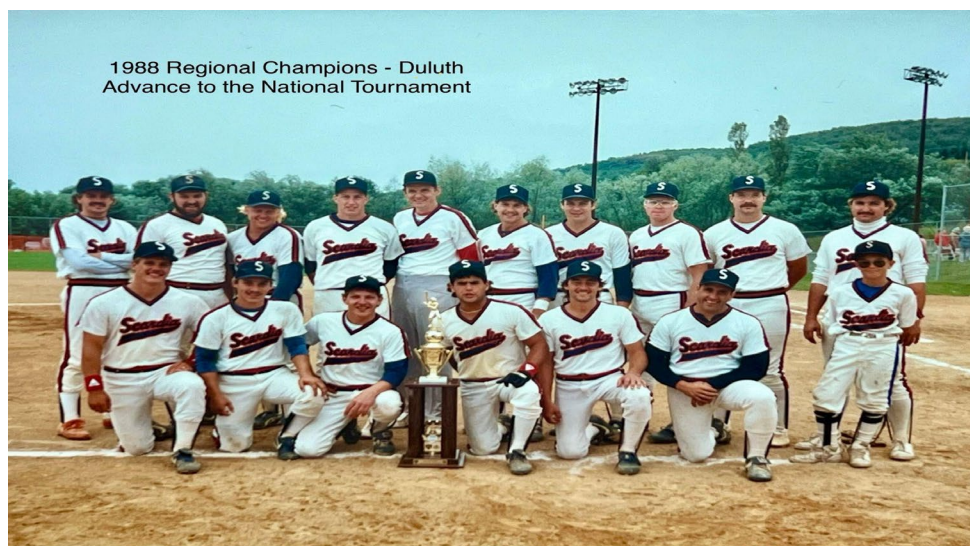
AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Small logo and number 75

Letter from the Governor of Minnesota, Rudy Perpich, to Richard Quigley, manager of Scandia's Fastpitch team.

1988: The Scandia Ranch team dominated the 1988 season, consistently winning or placing high in tournaments. At the Class A State Tournament, they easily advanced to the semifinals, where they faced Wabasso, which was seeking revenge for the previous year's loss against Scandia. Scandia won a grueling 9-inning game but lost the winner's bracket championship to Stewart Taylor of Duluth in another extra-inning match. Despite this, Scandia's third-place finish qualified them for the Northern Regional Tournament in Duluth. This time, Scandia defeated Stewart Taylor 5-2 for the Northern Regional championship and advanced to the national tournament.¹⁶⁵

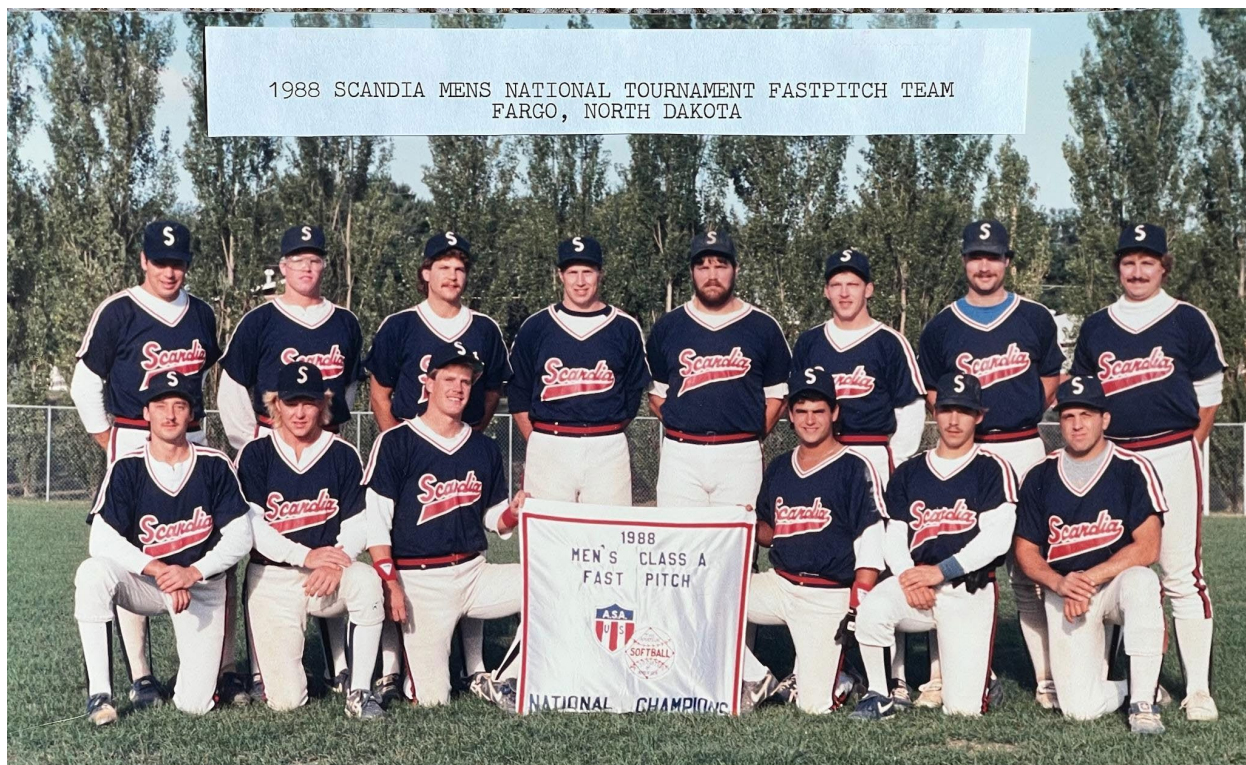
At the ASA Class A Men's National Tournament in Fargo, North Dakota, Scandia lost their opening game to Lynden, Washington, (who finished 3rd), 4-0. They rebounded with three consecutive wins against Milton, Massachusetts (5-0); Highland, Indiana, (5-1); and Pine Grove, Pennsylvania, (4-1). They were then eliminated by Elgin, Illinois, 2-0, a team they had previously defeated 9-2 at the Eau Claire Classic. Scandia's 3-2 record at Nationals earned them a 17th-place finish out of 54 teams. Manager Richard Quigley remarked, "We finished 17th in the nation, and we didn't even play close to our capabilities." The 1988 season concluded with a 59-26-1 record for Scandia.¹⁶⁶



Scandia's Men's Fastpitch Team Regional Champions. Front row left to right: Brad Jerrick, Dave Miller, Mitch Thompson, Keith Miller, Keith Schmidt, Steve Lempelius, Kyle Quigley (batboy). Back row left to right: Mike Newby, Jeff Chelberg, Jim Leisz, Greg Isaacson, Garen Engquist, Brian McLaughlin, Larry Chelberg, Joel Nelson, Dan Lindgren, Richard Quigley.

¹⁶⁵ *Duluth News Tribune*, "Stewart-Taylor gains in Class A softball," August 22, 1988, page 14.

¹⁶⁶ *Stillwater Evening Gazette*, "Scandia 17th at Class A nationals," Wednesday, September 7, 1988, page 3.



1988 Scandia Men's National Fastpitch Team. Front row, left to right: Keith Schmidt, Jim Leisz, Brad Jerrick, Keith Miller, Dave Miller, Steve Lempelius. Back row, left to right: Larry Chelberg, Joel Nelson, Brian McLaughlin, Greg Isaacson, Jeff Chelberg, Mitch Thompson, Dan Lindgren, Richard Quigley.

1989: The 1989 Scandia Class A men's season was off to a great start with a 9-0 start in the St. Croix Valley league by the end of June.¹⁶⁷ The team once again went to the Kaki Lawton Tournament in Portage, Wisconsin, which had a number of teams competing that were at the previous year's National Tournament.¹⁶⁸ In late June, Scandia achieved victory at the Rice Lake, Wisconsin, tournament. Demonstrating exceptional dominance, Scandia finished the tournament with a flawless 5-0 record. Notably, pitchers Keith Schmidt and Greg Isaacson collectively held their opponents scoreless throughout the entire competition.¹⁶⁹

In 1989, the ASA introduced National Qualifying Tournaments, and in July Scandia traveled to the Northern Regional Tournament in Fargo. At a challenging qualifier, featuring defending National Champion Stewart-Taylor of Duluth, former State Champion Wabasso, Minnesota, and other top regional teams, Scandia Fastpitch emerged undefeated. Their 5-0 record in the National Qualifying Tournament secured their third consecutive appearance at the Men's

¹⁶⁷ *Star Tribune*, "No Offence, but pitching and defence are keys in all-star series," June 25, 1989, page 58.

¹⁶⁸ *The Country Messenger*, "Scandia Wins Portage Tourney," Wednesday, June 14, 1989, n.p.

¹⁶⁹ *The Fastpitch Chronicle*, "Scandia Wins At Rice Lake," June 1989, Vol 1, No. 10, n.p.

National Tournament in Highland, Indiana. Securing a third consecutive appearance was a great accomplishment and was unique in Minnesota Class A history, making Scandia one of only five teams nationwide to make the National Tournament three years in a row. Scandia was ranked #1 in Minnesota by Let's Play Softball on August 17, 1989 (ASA all levels). The team entered the National Tournament with momentum.¹⁷⁰

Scandia boasted a strong presence at the State Tournament, sending not just one, but three teams. In addition to the primary team, Swensons Superette, under Bill Moore's management, secured a third-place finish at the District III Class B playoffs, earning them a spot. Likewise, the Class C team, led by Paul Kendrick and featuring a mix of high school talent and experienced baseball converts, also competed at the state level.¹⁷¹

Scandia's National Tournament journey began with a 3-2 victory over Louisville, Colorado, a team with two previous 4th-place finishes. This was followed by a 2-0, 10-inning win against Marion, Indiana. A narrow 2-1 loss to D.C. Tire of Pendel, Pennsylvania, who went on to be National Runner-Up and included many former national champions, was a setback. Scandia rebounded with a 9-0 victory over Salt Lake City, Utah, before being eliminated by Mountainside, New Jersey, 6-1.

With a 3-2 record and two wins in the winner's bracket, Scandia earned a 13th-place finish at Nationals, marking their highest ever. The 1989 season concluded with an impressive 50-19 record for Scandia Fastpitch.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ *The Country Messenger*, "Bound for the Nationals," August 2, 1989, Vol.4, No. 12, n.p.; *Let's Play Softball*, Scandia National's Bound," August 3, 1989, page 3.

¹⁷¹ *Let's Play Softball*, "Scandia wins league title," August 17, 1989, n.p.

¹⁷² *The Country Messenger*, "Scandia 13th Best in U.S., September 27, 1989, Vol. 4, No. 20, n.p.



1989 Scandia Men's National Fastpitch Team. Front row, left to right: Jeff Chelberg, Keith Miller, Rick Smith, Steve Joyce, Jack Reese, Al Bahn. Second row, left to right: Garen Engquist, Kyle Quigly, Dan Lindgren, Joel Nelson, Guy Carlson, Greg Isaacson, Richard Quigley, John Engquist. Third row, left to right: Dave Miller, Tim Schmidt, Mitch Thompson, Keith Schmidt, Brian McLaughlin, Jim Leisz.

The 1990s

Scandia's fastpitch team continued its winning tradition into the 1990s, achieving success at the Class C competitive level, the third-highest tier. Led by Isaacson, Lindgren, Keith Schmidt, and Joe Eichten, the team consistently advanced through tournaments and national qualifiers, making more national championship appearances than in any other decade.

1990: In 1990, a Scandia team participated in the state tournament, but it was under the Men's Class C Fastpitch. They won the title.¹⁷³ Scandia's journey to the Class C State Tournament Championship was fueled by veteran pitchers Paul Kendrick and Steve Brown. Despite entering the tournament determined, their undefeated run in the State Tournament was far from easy. A

¹⁷³ "1990 ASA State Champions," <https://softballhistorymn.com/1990-asa-state-champions/>, accessed April 30, 2025

crucial moment came in the Saturday evening clash of undefeated teams, where Scandia trailed 3-1 against DaBoys from Geneva, heading into the seventh inning. Showing their resilience, the young team rallied with three runs in the top of the seventh. Paul Kendrick then secured the victory, shutting down their opponents in the bottom of the inning. Ultimately, Scandia emerged triumphant, winning the State Championship.

Scandia's Class A team dominated the Great Lakes National Qualifier Tournament in Rockford, Illinois, going undefeated with a 5-0 record. This victory secured their remarkable fourth consecutive appearance at the Class A National Tournament in Minot, North Dakota. The competition was exceptionally strong, with seven of the 18 participating teams having competed in the previous year's Class A National Tournament. Keith White, the national tournament director, acknowledged Scandia's achievement, noting they were the tenth team to qualify and expressing doubt that any other team would match their streak of four consecutive national appearances.¹⁷⁴

Scandia Men's Fastpitch concluded its season at Nationals with a 1-2 record, competing amongst 54 of the nation's top Class A teams. In a rematch from two years prior, they began by securing a 6-0 victory over Lynden, Washington. However, they faced a 3-1 loss against Boulder, Colorado, an opponent they had previously encountered. Ultimately, their tournament run ended with a 4-1 defeat by Grants Pass, Oregon. Despite their performance at Nationals, Scandia achieved a 60-22 season record and made their fourth consecutive appearance at the National Tournament.¹⁷⁵

1991: Manager Richard Quigley praised his 1991 Class A Men's Fastpitch team, declaring, "This is the best team we have ever assembled." Having won the Eugene Holm National Qualifying Tournament in Fargo in July undefeated, Scandia secured a spot in the Men's Class A National Tournament. The team edged out Empire Lettering of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, 2-1 in ten innings during the championship game. This victory marks Scandia's fifth consecutive appearance at the Men's National Tournament, scheduled for Boulder, Colorado.¹⁷⁶

Scandia began the Men's Class A National Tournament in Boulder with a 3-1 victory against St. Louis, Missouri. They then faced a tough loss in Game 2 to the California Bullets of Santa Cruz,

¹⁷⁴ *Fastpitch Chronicle*, Scandia Wins Rockford Qualifier, July 1990, n.p.

¹⁷⁵ *Forest Lake Times*, Scandia Class A National Fastpitch Results, September 20, 1990.

¹⁷⁶ *Fastpitch Chronicle*, Scandia, Minnesota Update, July 1991, page 6; *Fastpitch Chronicle*, "Scandia Wins Holm Qualifier," August 1991, n.p.

California, a major contender. Despite a 5-0 first-inning lead, Scandia lost 11-9 in 8 innings. This loss spurred a rally through the loser's bracket, resulting in four consecutive wins. First, Scandia defeated the New Jersey Windmillers of Mountainside, 6-5. They then beat Kokomo, Indiana, the Midwest Regional Champion, 7-6. Following this, they defeated the Metros of Columbus, Ohio, the 1989 National runner-up, 7-5. In their sixth game, Scandia dominated the Bay Area Angels of Oakland, California, with a 19-5 victory. Finally, in Game 7, Scandia was defeated by Boston, 10-7. With a 5-2 record, Scandia secured a 9th-Place Finish at Nationals, their best to date, and a top-10 result for Scandia Men's Fastpitch.¹⁷⁷ Scandia Men's Fastpitch concluded 1991 as the #1 Ranked team in Minnesota.¹⁷⁸



1990 Scandia Men's National Fastpitch Team. Front row, left to right: Richard Quigley, Keith Miller, Kyle Quigley, Mike Brochman. Second row, left to right: Keith Schmidt, Rick Smith, Steve Joyce, Dave Miller, Brian McLaughlin, Jim Leisz. Third row, left to right: Jack Reese, Guy Carlson, Brad Ramberg, Greg Isaacson, Paul Nord, John Vandloy, Tim Schmidt, Joe Eichten.

¹⁷⁷ *Let's Play Softball*, "Scandia Fastpitch 9th in U.S.," September 26, 1991, page 17.

¹⁷⁸ *Minnesota Amateur Sports Review*, "Fast Pitch Enjoy Banner Year; Successes, Downers Seen in Class A Finale," Nov/Dec 1991, n.p.



1991 Scandia Men's National Fastpitch Team. Left to right: Guy Carlson, Mike Brochman, Scott Hesse, Keith Diethert, Mike Newby, Ron Bouley, Steve Kramer, Scott Musolf, Kyle Quigley, Richard Quigley, Chris Isaacson, Keith Miller, Steve Joyce, Greg Isaacson, Mile Marso, Jerry Hughes, Brad Ramberg, Joe Eichten.

1992: In 1992, Scandia -- sponsored by Minnesota Computers -- won the District III and District IV Men's Class B Fastpitch tournaments. Scandia defeated Dunham's of West Saint Paul 11-3 in 5 innings.¹⁷⁹ The Men's Class A Fastpitch team came in second place, losing to Interstate Spur of Duluth, 5-4.¹⁸⁰ The Scandia team along with teams from Duluth and Stillwater traveled to participate in the Class A national fastpitch softball tournament in Sacramento, California.¹⁸¹ Scandia made it to fourth round play but ultimately was defeated by an Ohio team.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ *Star Tribune*, "Softball," August 11, 1992, page 36.

¹⁸⁰ "1992 ASA State Champions," <https://softballhistorymn.com/category/1992/>, accessed April 30, 2025, and *Star Tribune*, "Softball," August 17, 1992, 27.

¹⁸¹ *Star Tribune*, "Wolves Hire Babcock as scout," September 3, 1992, page 36.

¹⁸² *Star Tribune*, "Softball," September 7, 1992, page 30.

1993: In August of 1993, Scandia participated in the ISC World Tourney in Kimberly, Wisconsin, defeating a Las Cruces, New Mexico, team, 4-2.¹⁸³ By the beginning of September, Scandia was in Las Cruces, New Mexico, for the ASA Men's Fastpitch National Tournament. Scandia had a 60-27 record going into the tournament and leading them were pitchers Chuck Boom and Shane Bowman and hitters Boom, Steve Kramer, and Guy Carlson.¹⁸⁴ Scandia lost in the second round to an Indiana team, 3-0.¹⁸⁵

1994: In August of 1994, Scandia played in the Class A USA/ASA State Championships and beat St. Croix Valley Glass from Stillwater, 8-0.¹⁸⁶ By September, Scandia made its eighth consecutive appearance in the ASA Men's Fastpitch National Tournament in Salem, Oregon. The Scandia team was ranked No. 1 in Minnesota. Other teams participating included Stillwater, North Mankato, and Duluth.¹⁸⁷ Scandia made it to the quarterfinals and defeated a team from South Dakota, 9-0 in 6 innings, the game ended early due to a run-rule of more than 8 runs after 5 innings.¹⁸⁸ Ultimately, Scandia was eliminated by D.C. Tire from Pennsylvania by a score of 5-0.¹⁸⁹

1995: Little is written about the 1995 season and the Scandia team, save for one article in the Albert Lea Tribune. In August of the year, Scandia participated in the ASA Class C Men's Fast Pitch Softball Tournament in Mankato, Minnesota. Scandia was defeated by the Hitmen from Geneva, 7-4.¹⁹⁰ The overall winner of the Minnesota Men's Class C Fastpitch tournament was Morelli's from Saint Paul.¹⁹¹

1996: As with the previous year, the only mention of Scandia playing softball in 1996 was participation in the Third Base Bar-Juntunen Oil Fastpitch Tournament in Carlton, Minnesota. Scandia was defeated by the host team, 9-2.¹⁹²

1997: Mention of the Annual Scandia Tournament held in June occurred in Duluth papers in 1997. The home team was defeated by Jeff Foster Trucking-Third Base Bar from Duluth, 5-4.¹⁹³

¹⁸³ *Star Tribune*, "Softball," August 15, 1993, page 51.

¹⁸⁴ *Star Tribune*, "Minnesota Scene," September 3, 1993, page 30.

¹⁸⁵ *Star Tribune*, "Softball," September 5, 1993, page 56.

¹⁸⁶ *Star Tribune*, "Softball," August 1, 1994, page 27.

¹⁸⁷ *Star Tribune*, "Eveleth's Grant named to hockey Hall," September 1, 1994, page 38.

¹⁸⁸ *Star Tribune*, "Softball," September 5, 1994, page 26.

¹⁸⁹ *Star Tribune*, "Softball," September 6, 1994, page 27.

¹⁹⁰ *Albert Lea Tribune*, "Courier, Hitmen finish third in state," August 16, 1995, page 9.

¹⁹¹ 1995 ASA State Champions, <https://softballhistorymn.com/category/1995/>, electronic document accessed May 2, 2025.

¹⁹² *Duluth News Tribune*, "Softball," August 4, 1996, page 48.

¹⁹³ *Duluth News Tribune*, "Softball," June 29, 1997, page 35.

In July, Scandia was defeated by VCS Athletics, 8-0.¹⁹⁴ VCS Athletics went on to win the Minnesota Men's A Fastpitch tournament.¹⁹⁵

1998: In 1998, Scandia was in the Class C Goose Creek League with Bo Diddley's (St. Cloud), Brainerd Merchants, Lee's Sports Shop of Harris, Foster Trucking of Duluth, Cambridge Rebels, Town and Country Bank of Harris, Trails End of Scandia, Scandia Merchants, and a team from Siren, Wisconsin.¹⁹⁶ Scandia participated in the annual Bo Diddley's Men's Fastpitch Softball Classic in the A-B Class, but the results were not reported in newspapers.¹⁹⁷ Scandia did not appear in the state tournament in 1998.

1999: Mentions of a men's fastpitch team from Scandia did not appear in 1999 papers, but the 1999 Minnesota Men's B Fastpitch winners were Trails End (a restaurant in Scandia at the time) from the Goose Creek Valley League.¹⁹⁸

The 2000s

By the early 2000s, the popularity of men's fastpitch was declining. The sport was more popular amongst girls and women. The college sport especially started to draw more support and interest amongst women athletes and supporters of all kinds. In Minnesota the slow pitch game continued to grow in popularity amongst adult players. It was an easier sport to play during a person's later years.

There was also a decrease in coverage of adult sports by the newspapers. Coverage instead focused on prep/high school or college coverage during the early 2000s. The *Post-Bulletin* in Rochester listed Men's Fastpitch games as broadcasted on AM radio in 2000.¹⁹⁹ The only mention of the state tournament was in a Duluth paper for the Class B played in Mankato.²⁰⁰

The first mention of results in a major paper for the state tournament came in 2001 in the *Star Tribune* newspaper, and it lists the B, C, and D champions,²⁰¹ none of which were from Scandia. The only coverage regarding men's fastpitch softball in 2002 was for the International Softball

¹⁹⁴ *Duluth News Tribune*, "Softball," July 20, 1997, page 39.

¹⁹⁵ 1997 ASA State Champions, <https://softballhistorymn.com/category/1997/>, electronic document, accessed May 2, 2025.

¹⁹⁶ *St. Cloud Times*, "Bo Diddley's gets off to a slow start," June 14, 1998, page 33.

¹⁹⁷ *St. Cloud Times*, "Bo Diddley's hosts huge, new-look tournament," July 11, 1998, page 23.

¹⁹⁸ 1999 ASA State Champions, <https://softballhistorymn.com/category/1999/>, electronic document, accessed May 2, 2025.

¹⁹⁹ *Post-Bulletin*, "On Deck, Radio," June 7, 2000, page 42.

²⁰⁰ *Duluth News Tribune*, "Softball," August 14, 2000, page 20.

²⁰¹ *Star Tribune*, "Softball," August 14, 2001, page 28.

Congress (ISC) Gopher State Men's Fastpitch Softball Travel League tournament to be held in Geneva, Wisconsin. Five teams participated in round robin play to determine who earned a berth in the ISC world tournament in Kitchener, Ontario.²⁰²

The only coverage in 2003 was for tournaments including the NAFA Men's World Class A Tournaments in Windom, Minnesota, and Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, and the Class B and C State Championship in Austin, Minnesota.²⁰³ This is how the coverage continued usually for tournaments for entry into the National Tournament or smaller regional tournaments that may or may not feed into the state tournament.

During this time, a number of news articles appeared about the decline of men's fastpitch softball. One article in a Worthington, Minnesota, paper detailed how a team which was formed in the 1980s faced an uncertain future. The veterans of the team in their late 40s were doubtful that they could play another season. Ongoing injuries and potential loss of the ace pitcher were cited for the potential disbanding.²⁰⁴ In an article regarding the Willmar High School girls fastpitch team's successes since 1978, the writer mentions that men's fastpitch was popular after World War II and began to fade by the 1970s. It also notes that the game is now "thriving on the arms of daughters."²⁰⁵

In 2011, Scandia honored Hall of Famer Wayne Erickson by renaming the city's lighted ball field to "Wayne Erickson Memorial Ball Park."

In 2025, Scandia will once again host a fastpitch tournament with locals of all ages that want to play, to celebrate the tradition that started in the 1940s. Even though Scandia is not talked about amongst the best of the nation, it's still remembered for its contributions to the sport, and Wayne Erickson Memorial Ball Park remains as a beacon to the early days and an early lighted field in Minnesota.

²⁰² *Albert Lea Tribune*, "Sports in Brief," May 8, 2002, page 8.

²⁰³ *Duluth News Tribune*, "Softball," July 21, 2003, page 16; *Austin Daily Herald*, "Todd Park to host tournaments this weekend," August 7, 2003, page 8; *Duluth News Tribune*, "Fastpitch," August 16, 2003, page 38.

²⁰⁴ *The Globe*, "P.J.'s II: Last time to shine?" August 8, 2003, page 11.

²⁰⁵ *West Central Tribune*, "Daughters carry on fastpitch tradition," May 25, 2006, page 15.

Minnesota Softball Hall of Fame

The Minnesota Softball Hall of Fame was started in 1982 with 35 inductees, which included Louis Rober, the organizer of the first kitten ball teams in Minnesota. The first Scandia player to be inducted was Wayne Ericson in 1984, along with 15 other inductees from across the state. The five Hall-of-Fame Players hailing from Scandia and who played most of their careers with Scandia are:

- Wayne Erickson
- Phil Anderson
- Jim Lindberg
- Doniver Ahlm
- Greg Benson

Two additional Hall-of-Fame inductees who played for both Scandia and Stillwater over their careers are:

- Joseph Junker
- Joe Eichten

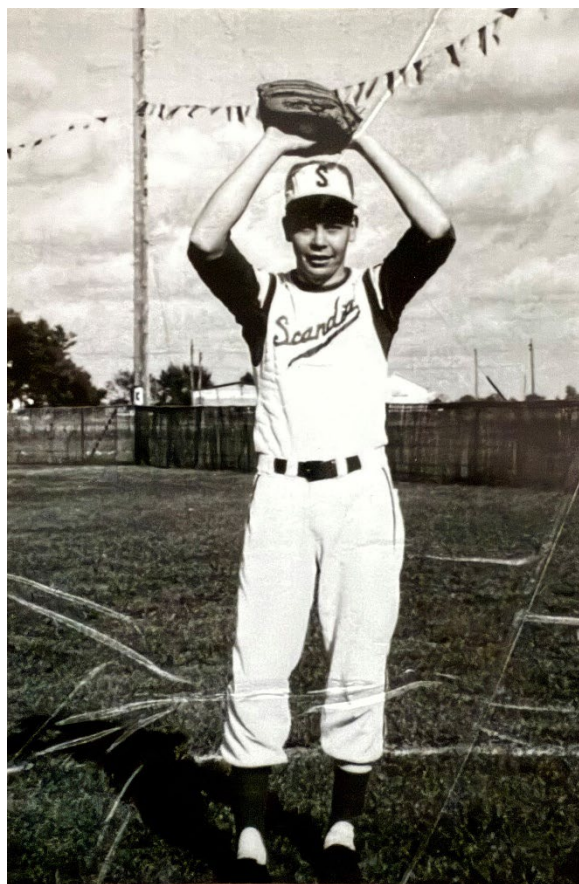
Below are short biographies for these seven players. The Hall of Fame Inductee list includes Scandia behind the name for each of these players.

Other Hall of Fame players who played primarily for a different team but sometimes for Scandia – and who do not hail from Scandia -- include, but not limited to:

- Don Barnholt (Stillwater)
- Dave (Choc) Junker (Stillwater)
- Dave Junker (Stillwater)
- Ron Witzel (Lake Elmo)
- Dave Meyer (Harris)
- Dale Root (Mankato)

Wayne Erickson (1984)

Wayne Erickson grew up in Scandia, but early in his softball career he played on teams in St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Scandia. Eligibility rules changed and restricted players to one community. Wayne stuck with his home, Scandia, but not before he was named most valuable player by the Minneapolis Park Board in 1961. Between 1956 and 1966, Wayne recorded a total of 65 no-hitter games and 58 one-hitter games. By 1963, Wayne pitched Scandia to the Class A State Championship. For the whole tournament he allowed only one run and struck out 18 hitters. He was also named most valuable player in the whole state in 1963. With Wayne on the pitching mound, Scandia went on to win the Class AA championships in 1967, 1968, 1969 and 1971.²⁰⁶



During Wayne's career, he was known for often pitching three or four games in a day, and in June of 1964, he pitched, and won, six games -- in two games giving up only one run, 19 hits and struck out 54 players.²⁰⁷ Wayne was an inspiration for pitchers in Scandia and the state for decades after his tenure.

Wayne graduated from Forest Lake High School and lettered in track, basketball, and baseball. He then worked as a mechanic at his father's service station in Scandia called Erickson Garage. Wayne eventually bought the business and ran the garage. He is also known for bowling perfect 300-score games and achieving a hole in one in golf. Tragically, Wayne died in 1992 at the age of 54 from Wegener's Disease.

²⁰⁶ Minnesota Softball Foundation, Hall of Fame Profile, Wayne Erickson, 1984.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.



Jim Lindberg (2022)

Jim Lindberg was born, raised and played softball in Scandia his whole fastpitch career. Jim grew up watching Wayne Erickson pitch and started pitching a windmill at age 12. By age 14, he was pitching for the Scandia Boy Scout Troop. At Forest Lake High School, Jim played shortstop but also served as a sub to the Scandia fastpitch team in the summer. Jim, Greg Benson, and Doniver Ahlm formed a Marine on St. Croix team with younger players from the area and played there before being recruited to the Scandia team. Jim went to college at Gustavus Adolphus in St. Peter where he participated in intramural softball, where their team caused a team made up of faculty to stop playing in the league.²⁰⁸

After college Jim joined the National Guard, where he continued to play softball and pitched the team to tournaments. Returning to Scandia, Jim pitched for 20 years, leading Scandia to many league championships and advancement to state tournaments. Jim was not just a pitcher, but also a great hitter and fielder of this position, which helped propel the team to excellence.²⁰⁹

Jim lives in Scandia with his wife, Kris. He served many years as President of Security State Bank of Marine, which has a local Scandia branch. He retired from the bank in 2012.



Phil Anderson (2022)

Phil Anderson was one of two pioneers of Scandia softball, along with Lester "Lefty" Benson. Phil started in 1946 as a 19-year-old catcher for Benson. By 1956, Phil was helping another young pitcher develop his skills, Wayne Erickson. Phil and Wayne earned their first state fastpitch title in 1963. Twenty years into his career, Phil had participated in 14 state tournaments, of which his team won the Class A title in 1963 and Class AA titles in 1967, 1968, 1969, and 1971.²¹⁰

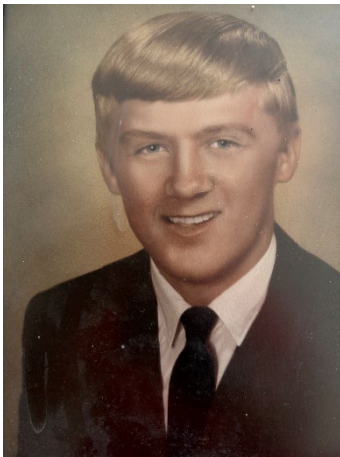
²⁰⁸ Minnesota Softball Federation Hall of Fame Profile, Jim Lindberg, submitted in 2022; Jim Lindberg interview with author, April 25, 2025.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Minnesota Softball Federation Hall of Fame Profile, Phil Anderson, submitted in 2022.

Phil served as an officer in the Scandia Softball Association and was involved in running the Annual Scandia Fastpitch Tournament. Phil was instrumental in establishing a supportive and large fan base that rallied around Scandia for decades.

Phil and his family ran a dairy farm in Scandia, where he was born and raised. The farm was located on the eastern shore of Big Marine Lake. Phil's sons David and Jim followed in their dad's footsteps and played for Scandia.



Doniver Ahlm (2022)

Doniver Ahlm grew up in Scandia during the 1950s and 1960s and watched the great Wayne Erickson play for Scandia. Doniver started as a baseball shortstop and pitcher at Forest Lake High School and played college ball at St. Cloud State University. However, he wanted to play fastpitch softball with Scandia after college just like the players he grew up watching. Doniver played shortstop in the AA State Tournament of 1971. He played in the state-record 25-inning game against Mankato in the AA Regional

tournament in Duluth, where he scored the only run. Doniver also played in numerous All-star games and won an MVP award at the 1975 Harris tournament.²¹¹

Doniver started his training for softball early by playing sandlot softball, baseball, plastic/wiffle ball, or rubber ball in front lawns or ballparks with his friends. He tried out for baseball in eighth grade and continued through two years of college. Unfortunately, he ruined his pitching arm by throwing snowballs to the top of a 14-story building in those first two years of college at St. Cloud State.²¹²

Doniver not only had a great career in softball, but also as a teacher and coach in the North Branch school system and dabbled in acting with Masquers Theatre in Forest Lake.²¹³ Doniver and his wife, Jean, live in Forest Lake.

²¹¹ Minnesota Softball Federation Hall of Fame Profile, Doniver Ahlm, submitted in 2022.

²¹² Doniver Ahlm, in person interview with author, April 25, 2025.

²¹³ Minnesota Softball Foundation Hall of Fame Profile submitted in 2022.



Greg Benson (2023)

Greg Benson is the son of Lester “Lefty” Benson, who put together the first Scandia fastpitch team in the 1940s. Greg started playing in 1964 on an upstart team in neighboring Marine on St. Croix with Lindberg and Ahlm. The team had some tough competition from the Friendly Valley League and nearby rivals Scandia and Stillwater. Greg and the youngsters from Marine won their first league title in 1967. In 1968, Greg joined the Scandia team and caught for the great Wayne Erickson. In the AA Championships, Erickson pitched a two-hit game, and Greg scored three runs -- leading to their third consecutive state tournament. Both players went on to represent the All-star team. Greg played on and off in the 1970s, He was known for his long home runs and for catching with just a mitt and a facemask. Greg later played with his three boys in the 1990s, when Scandia won the state tournament in Mankato.²¹⁴ Three generations of Benson men played softball for Scandia.

Benson also had an impressive High School and College career in baseball. In fact, a baseball coach for the Forest Lake High School team stated that Benson had “more potential than any player I’ve seen around here in a long time.” He went on to state that Benson “should be playing baseball, that’s where he belongs, not on the softball field.”²¹⁵

During an interview with Benson, he stated, “Softball has been synonymous with Scandia, going back to right after World War II when my dad and Stan Sanquist started it. It was a big deal, not just in Scandia, but in the whole five-state region.”²¹⁶

Greg Benson’s career in fastpitch spanned the 1960s and 1970s and again in the early 1990s with his sons. He was a great hitter known for his long homerun whacks, as well as a catcher and an ambassador of the game in Scandia. He was inducted in the Minnesota Softball Hall of Fame in 2022.

After a long career in banking, Greg retired in 2006 as President of First State Bank and Trust in Bayport, Minnesota. He and his wife Mary raised their three boys in Scandia, in a home previously owned by Greg’s grandparents.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ *Forest Lake Times*, “Baseball league here expands to six teams,” March 31, 1966, page 21.

²¹⁶ Google meet interview with the author on April 15, 2025.

Joseph “Dutz” Junker (2001)

Joseph “Dutz” Junker started his fastpitch career in 1955 at age 14 when he played for the Grain Belt Juniors in Stillwater. He spent five years in the Juniors when he moved up to the Seniors. During this same time, he was also playing baseball for the Stillwater Loggers. In 1963, Joe played with Scandia and was named an all-state fielder. In 1969, Joe was named to the All-Tournament Team at the Regional tournament in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Joe later played for Lake Lillian in 1981 and went to Nationals for four straight years. From 1985-1994, Joe played in Saint James on an over-40 team and attended ten straight national tournaments and was named 2nd team All-American two times.²¹⁷

Joe Eichten (2023)

Joe Eichten was a Stillwater native who played football and baseball during his high school career. Joe went to the University of St. Thomas for college where he continued his baseball career. After college, Joe moved to Houston, Texas, but returned to the Scandia area by 1982. In this year he joined the Lake Elmo teams and played in the Friendly Valley League in the early 1980s as a shortstop. In 1986 he returned to Stillwater, where he helped lead his team to the 1989 ASA Class A National Tournament. In 1990, Joe joined the Scandia team and helped lead them to three more Class A National Tournaments from 1990-1992. Joe ended his softball career back in Stillwater.²¹⁸

Softball and the Community

It is hard to research what impact a softball team has had on a community. Newspaper articles about games report the scores and how many strikeouts and hits were accumulated and mentions fundraisers for the team. The newspapers do not always mention how many spectators or family members are participating in the games. Therefore, this section includes summarization of interviews with the living Hall of Fame players, players from the 1980s, and the daughters of Wayne Erickson regarding the community.

²¹⁷ Minnesota Softball Federation Hall of Fame Profile, Joseph “Dutz” Junker, submitted in 2001.

²¹⁸ Minnesota Softball Foundation Hall of Fame Profile, submitted in 2023.

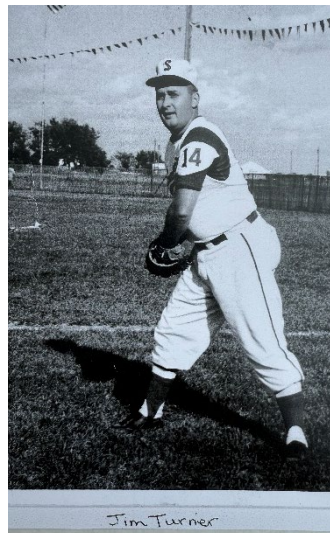
Originating in the 1940s, Scandia softball has long been a central community event. In a town of just under 1,000 people, Lester Benson founded a team that quickly ignited widespread local enthusiasm. Community fundraising efforts led to the installation of lights on the existing field, enabling night games. These evening games were crucial for broader participation, both from spectators and players alike. They especially accommodated farmers and workers, who could now join in after their daily tasks were finished.

Scandia softball was always a family affair. Multiple generations participated in the sport throughout the years. In many families, fathers and sons – and even grandsons – played on the team over the years -- including, but not limited to -- the Bensons: Lester (father), Greg (son) and lastly Ryan, Mike, Josh (grandsons); the



Greg Benson with sons Ryan, Mike, and Josh.

Andersons: Phil (Father) and David and Jim (sons); the Junkers: David “Choc” (father) and Dave (son) and Joe “Dutz” Junker; The Turners: Jim Turner (father) and Lee Turner (son); and the Isaacsons: Lowell (father) and Greg and Chris (sons).



Lowell Isaacson played for Scandia ahead of sons Greg and Chris.

In Scandia, support for the Fastpitch team extended beyond players.

Doniver Ahlm recalls his father, though not a game attendee, publicly announcing game details and opponents throughout town from a car fitted with loudspeakers. This unique method of advertisement ensured the whole community was informed of the team's activities.

Scandia Fastpitch engaged in various fundraising efforts over the years. One unique event was a play performed by players, their wives, and supporters. Additionally, they hosted "smokers," gambling gatherings held in Wayne Erickson's garage basement, featuring games like blackjack and slots. The funds were used to cover uniforms, equipment, tournament fees, and travel

expenses. Wayne Erickson's daughters, Linda, Lynette, and Deborah, remember searching through the sod-covered dirt floor for lost coins after these events.

Fastpitch participation deeply involved players' families. Spouses and children regularly dedicated evenings and weekends to games and tournaments. Some players competed on multiple teams weekly, leading to frequent nightly play. Erickson's daughters remember their mother constantly washing uniforms and rarely missing a game. They didn't complain, though. They looked forward to the orange crush soda and popcorn at the games, sometimes purchased with money discovered on the floor during fundraising gatherings. The most memorable moments were the out-of-town tournaments. Staying in hotels, especially those with pools, was a highlight for the children. These trips set them apart from other kids in their small town, as few had ever stayed in a hotel.

Conclusion

Scandia's fastpitch softball legacy is built on two pillars: exceptional pitching and strong community support. Throughout their championship-winning history, the team consistently boasted remarkable pitchers, starting with "Lefty" Benson and continuing through Wayne Erickson, Jim Lindberg, and Greg Isaacson. These pitchers served as a magnet, attracting other talented players eager to join the successful team or compete against it. Beyond the talent on the field, the unwavering support of families, local businesses, and passionate spectators transformed Scandia Fastpitch games into a must-see event, solidifying the team's status as a powerhouse.

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David Levinson & Karen Christensen, ed. (1996). Encyclopedia of World Sports. London & New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 371–73, Electronic Document,

<https://slobaanabolici.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/14416569-encyclopediaofworldsportfromancienttimestothepresent.pdf>, accessed April 2025.

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This newspaper had many stories about the formation of softball leagues, tournaments and other softball related things happening in Duluth and the state.

Duluth News Tribune, accessed via the Minnesota Historical Society, Minnesota Digital Newspaper Hub, <https://www.mnhs.org/newspapers/hub>, accessed March-May, 2025.

Just like the other duluth newspaper had many stories about the formation of softball leagues, tournaments and other softball related things happening in Duluth and the state.

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Newspaper Hub, <https://www.mnhs.org/newspapers/hub>, accessed March-May, 2025.

The most local newspaper to Scandia, provided a lot of information regarding the leagues that Scandia played in and also gave some information on how players did in individual games.

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[Newspapers.com](#)

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SCANDIA INVITATIONAL

SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT

JUNE 17, 18, 19, - 1966



TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR- JIM TURNER

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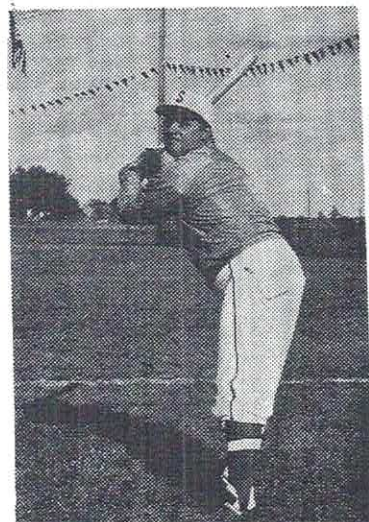
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PHIL ANDERSON

Veteran catcher has been playing for Scandia for 20 years. He has played in 14 State Tournaments and was the catcher on the 1963 State Class A Championship team. He won the "Red Hokanson" award for most valuable player in the Harris Tourney in 1962.



JOE JUNKER

Veteran left fielder. Joe is starting his fourth season with Scandia and has always been one of the leagues best hitters. Made All-State Tournament team in 1963. Joe is blessed with blinding speed on the bases, good throwing arm and has always been a 300 plus hitter.

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DALE COLBERG

Is in his first year as sponsor for the Scandia team. Dale is the local distributor for the Schmidt Brewing Co. and lives in Chisago City. Dale is, from all indications so far, very interested in all sports and follows the team closely. He is working very hard to make this Tournament the best in the state.

JERRY ALSTEAD

Shortstop who is a new man with Scandia this year. He also has made his presence felt this year with his slick fielding and base running. Jerry had the misfortune of breaking his leg the first league game. Everyone will be waiting for Jerry's return to the line-up.

ROGER ADAIR

Another outfielder, starting his first year with Scandia and has already made his presence known with his bat, fielding and throwing arm. Roger is a veteran baseball player but now enjoys playing softball.

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BUD HAWKINSON

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PHIL ANDERSON

SECRETARY

MARLIN THOMPSON

TREASURER

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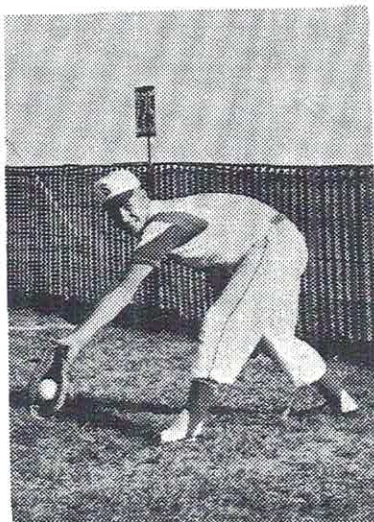
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DON SEGUIN

THANK YOU

JOHN'S BAR

JOHN HINZ OWNER
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STILLWATER, MINNESOTA



DON LE VASSUER

Utility infielder,
playing his first
year with Scandia and
plays well at both
second base and short-
stop.

DEAN CARLSON

Veteran first baseman
for Scandia for the
last several years.
Dean was chosen on the
All-State Tournament
team in 1963. Dean
has a good pair of
hands for a first base-
man and good throwing
arm. Hits with real
power and generally
leads team in homeruns
for the season.



DENNIS LOFBOOM

Has been a steady out-
fielder for Scandia
for the last 3 years.
One of the many left-
handed hitters on the
team with good power
and a pull hitter.
Also good at advancing
the runners along on
bunts.

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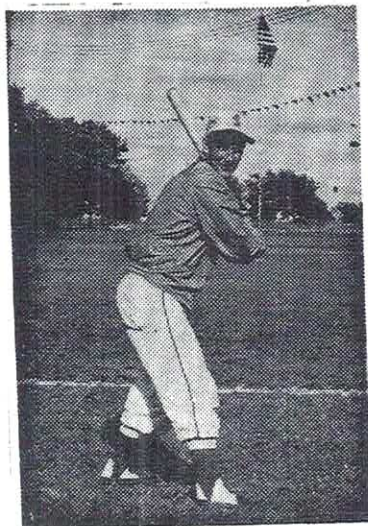
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FOREST LAKE



DAVE "CHOC" JUNKER

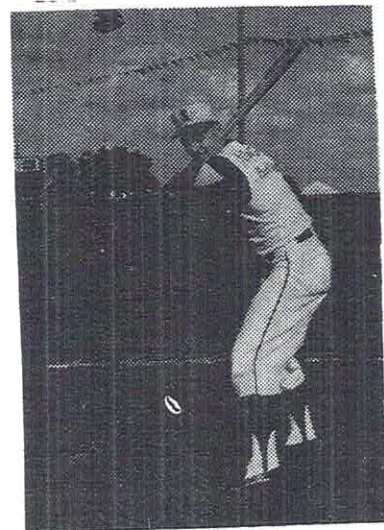
Veteran third baseman of the Friendly Valley League who is starting his third year with Scandia. Last year in over 70 games had a better than 400 average. Considered the best defensive third baseman in the league.

SCANDIA SOFTBALL OVER THE YEARS

Scandia played it's first softball games in 1946. The team was formed by Les Benson and Stan Sandquist. Other members on the team were Jim Croone, Lowell Isaacson, Jim Berglund, Phil Anderson, L. Johnson, Bob Bruss, and Leroy Carlson. This team played in the Chisago Lakes League and all the games were played at Chisago City.

The present ball park was built in 1948, when the land was leased from Lou Vain Holcomb. Scandia won most of the league championships in the Chisago Lakes League. Later on Scandia picked up two new ballplayers in Roger Hagstrom and Lyle Martinson. Many old timers in the area claim that Roger Hagstrom was the best center-fielder the league ever had.

Les "Lefty" Benson for many years was the main stay on the mound for Scandia as is Wayne Erickson is today.



MARK HAGSTROM

Veteran utility man of the team as he has played every position on the team at one time or other except pitcher. Mark is starting his fourth year with Scandia.

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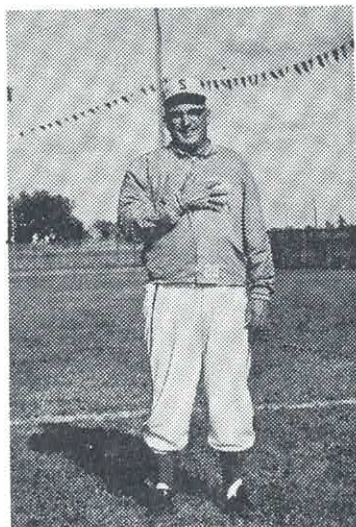
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DODGE BOYS
FOREST LAKE



DON SEGUIN

Has been the Scandia manager for the last 4 years and was a playing manager before that. The last 4 years Scandia has averaged over 70 games a season, has won better than 60 games each season and has won the league championship each year. Scandia won the State Class A championship in 1963 at Austin. Don has managed Scandia to championship in tournaments at Harris (3 times), Coon Rapids, Red Wing, Lake Elmo (3 times), Houlton (3 times), Owatonna, and Austin (2 times). He hopes he can bring a few more championships to Scandia in years to come.

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CONEY ISLANDS



HILDING NELSON

Score keeper, trainer and Treasurer of the team. Hildy is said to be the only score keeper in the league that figures batting averages with a slide rule.

ABRAHAMSON'S NURSERY

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MARLIN "TOMMY" THOMPSON

Regular second baseman. Good lead off man with good speed on the bases and has mastered the art of covering first base on bunts. Tommy is a sure fielder and has good throwing arm. Last year Tommy hit over 300.

ERICKSON'S GARAGE

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SCANDIA, MINN.
PHONE 297-4131

NEIL JUNKER

One of the 3 Junker brothers on the team can play any position. Former baseball player at the U of M and also Kansas City Athletics. Enjoys playing softball and is blessed with good arm, speed and has really good power with the bat.

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1966

--- SCHEDULE CODE ---

No. 1 - Hastings
No. 2 - Lake Elmo
No. 3 - Cosmopolitan Bank
No. 4 - Pla-Mor

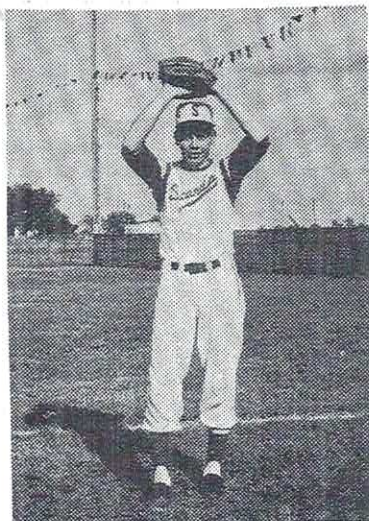
No. 5 - New Richmond
No. 6 - Sand Bar
No. 7 - Marine
No. 8 - River Falls

No. 9 - Twin Point
No. 10 - Scandia
No. 11 - Colony

(First number is visitor, second number is home team)

DATE	TEAMS	PLACE	TIME	UMPIRE
June 21	1-Bye			
	7-2	LE	8:30	Junker
	8-3	Stwr	8:30	Zoller
	9-4	Stwr	6:45	Zoller
	10-5	NR	8:30	
	11-6	Col	6:45	Junker
June 23	- Open for rescheduled games			
June 28	- " "	"	"	"
June 30	1-2	LE	8:30	Zoller
	3-4	Stwr	8:00	Junker
	5-6	Lak	6:45	Chris
	7-8	RF	8:00	
	9-10	Sca	8:30	Cummings
	11-Bye			
July 5	3-1	Hast	8:30	
	5-2	LE	8:30	Larson
	6-4	Stwr	8:00	Zoller
	9-7	Mar	6:45	Cummings
	11-8	Col	6:45	Junker
	10-Bye			
July 7	1-4	Stwr	8:00	Junker
	2-6	Lak	6:45	Chris
	3-5	NR	8:30	
	7-10	Sca	8:30	Cummings
	9-11	Col	6:45	Zoller
	8-Bye			
July 12	5-1	Hast	8:30	
	4-2	LE	8:30	Larson
	6-3	Stwr	8:00	Zoller
	11-7	Col	6:45	Junker
	10-8	RF	8:00	
	9-Bye			
July 14	1-6	Lak	6:45	Chris
	2-3	Stwr	8:00	Zoller
	4-5	NR	8:30	
	8-9	LE	8:00	Junker
	10-11	Col	6:45	Larson
	7-Bye			

DATE	TEAMS	PLACE	TIME	UMPIRE
July 19	7-1	Hast	8:30	
	8-2	LE	8:30	Junker
	9-3	Stwr	6:45	Zoller
	10-4	Stwr	8:30	Zoller
	11-5	Col	6:45	Junker
	6-Bye			
July 21	1-8	RF	8:00	
	2-9	LE	8:00	Zoller
	3-10	Sca	8:30	Cummings
	6-7	Mar	6:45	Cummings
	4-11	Col	6:45	Junker
	5-Bye			
July 26	9-1	Hast	8:30	
	10-2	LE	8:30	Junker
	11-3	Col	6:45	Zoller
	7-5	NR	8:30	
	8-6	Lak	6:45	Chris
	4-Bye			
July 28	1-10	Sca	8:30	Cummings
	2-11	Col	6:45	Junker
	4-7	Mar	6:45	Cummings
	5-8	RF	8:00	
	6-9	LE	8:00	Zoller
	3-Bye			
Aug 2	11-1	Col	6:45	Zoller
	7-3	Stwr	6:45	Junker
	8-4	Stwr	8:30	Junker
	9-5	NR	8:30	
	10-6	Lak	6:45	Chris
	2-Bye			
Aug 4	2-7	Mar	6:45	Cummings
	3-8	RF	8:00	
	4-9	LE	8:00	Zoller
	5-10	Sca	8:30	Cummings
	6-11	Col	6:45	Junker
	1-Bye			
Aug 9	- Open for rescheduled games			
Aug 11	" "	"	"	"
Aug 13 or 14	- All Star Game			
Aug 16	Playoffs - 4-1 & 3-2 (first 4 teams)			
Aug 18	Playoffs - 1-4 & 2-3			
Aug 20	Playoffs - 4-1 & 3-2			
Aug 23	Playoffs - Finals			
Aug 25	Playoffs - Finals			
Aug 27	Playoffs - Finals			



WAYNE ERICKSON

Veteran pitcher for Scandia for the last 10 years. Was voted All-State Tourney team as well as most valuable for the state in 1963. He has won just about every tournament that he's played in. Wayne has averaged 12 strikeouts per game over the last 4 years. He had 18 strikeouts in a game against LaVerne in the state tournament in 1963. He has recorded 65 no hit games and 58 one hitters. A lot of people believe he has yet to reach his peak as he is only 28 years old.

TOURNAMENT PAIRINGS

TWIN POINT - Lake Elmo		
Friday 7:30		
COZY BAR - St. Paul		
*****	Sat. 7:30	
WOODSHED - GRAIN BELT		
Red Wing		
Friday 9:00		
COSMOPOLITAN BANK		
Stillwater		
*****	Sun. 9:00	
UNIVAC - St. Paul		
Saturday 10:00		
PLA-MOR-REG		
Stillwater		
*****	Sat. 9:00	
BLOOMINGTON		
Saturday 11:30		
SCANDIA-SCHMIDT'S		
*****		Sun. 8:30
NEW BRIGHTON MERCHANTS		Championship
Saturday 1:00		
GO GETTERS - Lake Elmo		
*****	Sun. 12:00	
MARINE		
Saturday 2:30		
HARRIS TIGERS		
*****	Sun. 4:30	
HILLCREST BOWL-MORELLIS LIQUOR		
Saturday 4:00		
RICHIE'S BAR - Mpls.		
*****	Sun. 1:30	
JOHNNIE'S BAR - River Falls		
Saturday 5:30		
ADVANCE STAMP CO. - St. Paul		
*****		Sun. 7:00
		Consolation

BANK on the



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Stillwater, Minnesota

Scandia



*This report was researched and prepared
for Scandia Heritage Alliance by:*

Reveal History, LLC
Renee Barnes, MFA
249 Wyoming Street East
Saint Paul, MN 55107