

BEFORE WE WORE PINSTRIPES

The Eaton Fightin' Reds Baseball Program did not start in 1994, the year the Reds won their first spring State Title. It didn't begin in the 1980's either, when the Reds advanced to the Final Four a number of times. In fact, the program didn't even start in the 1970's when the Reds won a couple of league titles. 1972 saw Coaches Danley and Ervin start coaching the spring team, but even these coaches had been with the Reds since the summer of 1969. In fact, Eaton High School fielded a baseball team as far back as 1958, the actual first year of the Eaton Reds Baseball Program.



The Reds did not garner any media attention in 1958 and 1959 – the season preview articles for area teams didn't even discuss Eaton, probably due to the fact that no one was certain if Eaton would field a team. The Reds also did not experience a victory during these first two spring seasons. The lack of media attention and the fact that the Reds' players were not noted in the yearbooks from that era, leaves EatonBaseball.com without even the first names of these founding fathers so to speak. One box score from the 1958 season shows that the Reds batted Johnson at leadoff and playing second base, followed by Cazer at first base, with Weber at third base, Miller at shortstop, Pappenheim pitching and playing third base, Winter pitching and playing leftfield, Orr pitching and playing centerfield, Grauberger playing rightfield, and Kindsfater catching.

Reds' fans will note that these names would go on to appear many times over in the 1960's through 1990's, as many of these players' younger brothers, cousins, sons, and nephews would go on to become great players for the Reds.

Playing in the Tri-Valley League in 1958, the Reds lost the 3 games that they played to Brush, Fort Lupton and University. The Reds were to also play Lafayette this season, but that game was cancelled after Lafayette failed to field a team. The Reds did not field a summer baseball team in 1958.

In 1959, the Tri-Valley league had a 3-way tie at the top, but Eaton wasn't a part of it, as the Reds went 0-4 with losses to Fort Lupton, University, Lafayette and Brush. That summer though, the Reds played American Legion Baseball and defeated Platteville 11-0 on June 14th for the first victory in Eaton history. The Reds then defeated Longmont 5-0 and Fort Lupton 8-1 to start the summer season 3-0. After a loss to the Greeley Legion team, the Reds then defeated La Salle 8-2 before coming very close to pulling out what would have been a huge upset, but eventually falling to the Greeley Elks team. The Reds though then pulled off wins against Evans (4-3), Boulder (2-1) and Roosevelt (6-2) to end the season with a very strong 7-2 record to finish in 3rd place in the league standings, trailing only the two Greeley teams fed by what is now Greeley Central and University. The wins over the La Salle Spartans and Gilcrest Spuddiggers would be the first and only such wins for the Reds, as Valley High School would be created by the following summer.

<p>1960 Spring Lineup</p> <p>Warren Miller LF/P Alan Beede 2B Norm Blehm P/CF Rick Whitham 3B Ron Pappenheim P/SS Jim Johnson C/SS Jack Brunz 1B Don Engel CF/RF Mark Johnson OF</p>	<p>The Reds lost to Brush 6-2, before playing their first non-league game in history, losing to Greeley Central's JV team. The Reds then defeated Craig 6-3 for the Reds' first win all-time in a spring game. After a 3-0 loss to University, the Reds defeated Grover 10-3 before losing to Highland 6-2. The Reds then ended the spring with a 6-1 win over Fort Lupton to earn the Reds' first league victory in the spring. This, however, still landed the Reds in last place due to the head-to-head loss to University.</p> <p>That summer, the Reds rolled to big wins in their first 8 league games over Hudson (twice), Windsor, Valley (twice), Frederick, Wellington, and a 1-0 win over Greeley Elks. After dropping two close games to Longmont and Greeley Legion, the Reds then rolled to 6 straight wins over Windsor, Greeley Elks, Frederick, Longmont, Greeley Legion and Wellington to win the league championship. The Reds then advanced to the State Tournament, but lost to Denver in a best-of-3 game series that prevented the Reds from making the Final Four.</p>
<p>1961 Spring Lineup</p> <p>Alan Beede SS Chuck Bass CF Norm Blehm P/CF Warren Miller LF Don Blehm C Greg Springston RF Tracy Ehn 3B Ron Kindsfater 2B Curt Nicholson 1B Jack Brunz 3B John Busch LF</p>	<p>One spring after finishing in last place in league, the Reds defeated University 3-2, Fort Lupton 7-3, and Brush 4-3, but suffered a 1-0 defeat to Valley. The Reds also were perfect in non-league games with 2 wins over Frederick and a win over Highland. Per league rules, the Reds were determined to be the League Champions, but Valley advanced to the postseason.</p> <p>That summer, the Reds went 8-0 en route to their 2nd straight league championship. The Reds even defeated Legion A Greeley Elks-Legion to run their mark to 13-1 heading into the playoffs, after a non-league loss to Valley to start the season. The Reds then hosted their first playoff games at Eaton in history, and after losing the first game 2-0 to Clear Creek, the Reds came back to win the best-of-3 series the following day with 5-4 and 11-8 wins over Clear Creek. The Reds then travelled to Denver the next weekend, and lost to Denver North 7-6, before coming back that afternoon with a 1-0 win to force a 3rd game the next day, which the Reds won 8-2 to advance to the Reds' first ever State Championship Game. The underdog Reds faced Ent Air Force Base in Colorado Springs the next weekend, and defeated them 10-3 and 7-3 to claim the Reds' first State Championship victory in history.</p>
<p>1962 Spring Lineup</p> <p>Alan Beede SS John Busch LF Don Blehm P/C Norm Blehm P Warren Miller RF Jack Brunz 3B Ron Kindsfater 2B Chuck Bass CF Curt Nicholson 1B Rick Whitham C Art Meyer C Greg Springston LF</p>	<p>The Reds stormed through the first four games of the 1962 season, earning league wins over Weld Central, Valley and Fort Lupton. The Reds though then lost to Brush 5-0 to fall into 2nd place. The Reds defeated University 9-8 to finish the season and give the Reds a chance to keep their season alive, but Brush also won their final game to advance to the postseason.</p> <p>In the summer of 1962, the Reds dropped their opening league game to Fort Morgan, before rolling to wins in their next 9 league games with wins over Valley, Windsor, Greeley Legion, Roosevelt, Loveland, Longmont, Greeley Elks, Erie, and Louisville. This earned the Reds their 3rd straight league championship and advanced the Reds on to host the first round of the State Tournament. The Reds though lost 7-4 and 7-6 to Denver North to end the Reds' summer season.</p>
<p>1963 Spring Lineup</p> <p>Ron Kindsfater 2B John Busch C Greg Springston LF Don Blehm P/C Alan Beede SS/P Bud Harris RF Chuck Bass CF Jack Brunz 3B Curt Nicholson 1B</p>	<p>The Reds started the 1963 season with a 4-1 win over Valley and an 11-3 win over Fort Lupton. The Reds then lost to Brush 6-5, but came back to defeat University and Weld Central to force a one-game playoff with Valley for the league championship. The Reds hosted that game, and defeated Valley 6-1 to advance to the State Tournament. The Reds then hosted Platte Valley in the State Quarterfinals and defeated them 3-1 to advance the Reds to their first ever spring Final Four. The Reds lost the following weekend at home to Broomfield by the score of 8-4 to end the season.</p> <p>That summer, the Reds went 14-1, falling only to Greeley Legion during the regular season. The Reds won their 4th straight Legion B league championship, before losing two straight 5-4 games to Greeley Elks at Forbes Field in the State Tournament.</p>

<p>1964 Spring Lineup</p> <p>Ruben Duran RF/SS Ron Kindsfater P/2B Art Meyer C Jim Dahmer 3B Curt Nicholson 1B Rob McClure P/CF Louis Renteria CF/LF Gary Potter SS Tom Chagolla 2B Harvey Cozzens LF Carl Dalrymple C Eddie Duran LF</p>	<p>After graduating most of the Reds' players that had led Eaton to great heights in the previous few seasons, the Reds still challenged in the league, opening the season with an 11-10 loss to Brush, before defeating University 4-1 and Weld Central 11-6. The Reds then lost to Valley, before ending the season with a 7-5 win over Fort Lupton. The Reds did not play a single non-league game in 1964, and thus ended the season with a 3-2 record, placing the Reds in a tie for 2nd place. The Reds' final win of the season handed Fort Lupton their only loss in 1964.</p> <p>The Reds started the league season that summer with a 10-2 win over Roosevelt, but then lost 4 straight league games before defeating Platte Valley 12-5 and then beating Fort Morgan 3-1. The Reds won non-league games over Lafayette, Berthoud, Longmont and Highland, but the Reds then lost their next 3 non-league games to fall to 3-7 in league and 9-14 overall. Even though it was clear the Reds would not advance to the postseason for the first time this decade in summer games, the Reds played 3 more non-league games to end the season and prepare for the spring of 1965.</p>
<p>1965 Spring Lineup</p> <p>Dick Leffler 2B/P Ruben Duran CF/2B Ken Vance C Carl Dalrymple C/1B Jim Dahmer 3B Harvey Cozzens SS Rodney White RF Jim Ambrose LF Larry Nix 1B Kip Clugston P Steve Smith P/CF</p>	<p>1965 saw the start of the WELCO league, in which Roosevelt entered the league and Brush exited from what had previously been the Tri-Valley League. The Reds still opened the season with Brush and the Reds won the non-league game 1-0. The Reds then defeated Evans 9-0 in a non-league game, before opening the league season with a win over University. The Reds then scored 20 runs to beat Roosevelt, followed by another non-league win over Brush 15-0. The Reds fell to Valley 4-1 and then came back and beat Platte Valley 10-1. Close losses in the final two games to Weld Central and Highland ended the Reds' season. A game suspended due to high winds against Fort Lupton was never re-scheduled as both teams fell out of the league title race.</p> <p>The Reds started the summer with a 1-0 loss to Greeley Legion, followed by an 11-7 Reds' win over Evans and a 5-0 win over Valley. The Reds then lost two close games to Fort Morgan and suffered a 1-run loss to Valley, but the Reds played spoiler and defeated Greeley Legion 11-8 to force them into a tiebreaker game that ended up costing Greeley Legion a chance to move onto the postseason.</p>
<p>1966 Spring Lineup</p> <p>Allen Steele 2B John Sutter SS Dick Leffler CF Harvey Cozzens RF Ken Vance C Herman Hoff 3B Jack Miller LF Jim Ambrose 1B Kip Clugston P Doug Geisick 1B</p>	<p>The Reds started off the season undefeated, including a win in their first league game over Fort Lupton. The Reds then lost 6-4 to Valley, before the Reds ran off 5 straight wins against Weld Central, Highland, Platte Valley, University and Roosevelt to put the Reds in a tie for the league title. The Reds then played a one-game playoff at Butch Butler Field, and lost to Valley 9-5 to end the spring season with an 11-2 record. The Reds at least forced Valley to use their ace pitcher in the game, which cost Valley the next game in the playoffs, and ended their season, two days later.</p> <p>The Reds started the summer league season with a 5-1 record after wins over Highland (twice), University, Valley, and Greeley Legion. Close losses to Valley and Fort Morgan put the Reds in a must-win situation, and they did then beat University 6-4, but the Reds later fell to Fort Morgan a second time to fall out of the league race with a 6-4 league record and a 15-8 overall record.</p>
<p>1967 Spring Lineup</p> <p>Ken Vance C John Sutter SS Dick Leffler LF Herman Hoff 3B Jack Miller CF Dick Winter RF Doug Geisick 1B Allen Steele 2B Kip Clugston P John Schneider C</p>	<p>The Reds started the 1967 season with an 8-7 non-league win over Loveland, followed by a 22-2 win over Fort Lupton in a league victory. The Reds lost their next league game to Valley 3-0 before defeating Weld Central 2-0, Highland 5-2, University 5-2, and Roosevelt 11-5. The Reds never completed a game scheduled against Platte Valley though, as Valley had already locked up the league title and the Reds had to settle for 2nd place. The Reds ended the season with an 8-1 record.</p> <p>The Reds started the summer season with two wins against Grover, followed by losses to Greeley Legion and Valley. Following the graduation of a number of key players, the Reds played these games with a limited roster. After a couple of injuries, the Reds were forced to cancel the remainder of the summer season. This was an unacceptable situation for the community and for the Reds that had played earlier in the decade, and Norm Blehm returned to the Reds as coach the following summer.</p>

<p>1968 Spring Lineup</p> <p>Allen Steele SS Felix Galindo CF Larry Adams 1B Larry Cook C/LF John Schneider C Dick Wilcox RF Sam Suppes 3B Mike Sullivan P Caleb Johnson 2B Ben Mitchell LF</p>	<p>The Reds started off the season with a loss to Valley, before the Reds defeated Weld Central 18-6. The Reds then lost a series of close games to Highland, University, Roosevelt and Fort Lupton. The Reds finished in last place in the league standings following a loss to Platte Valley.</p> <p>After dropping the first 4 games of the summer, the Reds defeated Valley 9-3 for a key league win. The Reds then lost 11-10 to Highland before defeating Platte Valley 16-2 and then 18-6. The Reds also defeated Highland, Grover, and Longmont to finish the season 6-10 in league standings.</p>
<p>1969 Spring Lineup</p> <p>Barry Hager CF Tom Score 2B Scott Redman RF Ben Mitchell SS Larry Adams 1B Mike Sullivan P Ken Fuchs LF Sam Suppes 3B Ron Cook C Brad Adler P Steve Strong C Dick Wilcox P</p>	<p>The Reds started the spring of 1969 with shutout wins over Platte Valley and Weld Central. The Reds then lost 3 straight 1-run games to Highland, University and Roosevelt to fall out of contention in the league standings. The Reds though came back and defeated Fort Lupton 15-5. The season then ended with a loss to Valley 3-0.</p> <p>The summer of 1969 started with Coaches Danley and Ervin taking the helm of the Reds' summer team. The Reds won their first game 12-10 over Highland, followed by wins over two different Longmont teams. The Reds also defeated Windsor, and won non-league games against Valley, University and Grover. The Reds though finished the season at 7-13 overall.</p>
<p>1970 Spring Lineup</p> <p>Randy Foos P/SS Ken Fuchs 1B Scott Redman C Sam Suppes C/SS Steve Strong C/SS Stan Fox 2B Don Donahoo CF Dick Wilcox P/OF Tim Kawakami OF Phil Spencer 2B Doug Schnorr OF</p>	<p>The Reds lost to Highland, but then defeated University 9-8 and Roosevelt 2-0 to stay in contention in the spring of 1970. The Reds then lost to Valley and lost by 1 run to Fort Lupton, before the Reds beat Platte Valley, but then lost to Weld Central to end the season.</p> <p>The Reds experienced their toughest summer season in history, as they went 2-19, with back-to-back wins over Platte Valley 7-6 and a huge upset win 11-1 over Longmont after starting the summer 0-13. The Reds played reasonably well in the games that were close, but many of the Reds' games were frankly not very close in the summer of 1970.</p>
<p>1971 Spring Lineup</p> <p>Don Donahoo P/CF Rick McClure 3B Steve Strong P/CF Mike Eldridge C Randy Vogel LF Gary Heinze 1B Jack Cazer OF Cliff Foos P/SS Stan Benson OF Marty Damrell C/3B Joe Mitchell P/OF Gary Takahashi OF Jim Parker 2B</p>	<p>The WELCO League changed to have league doubleheaders starting in 1971, and the Reds started the season with a 3-2 win over Platte Valley. The Reds though lost their next 8 games, before defeating Platte Valley a 2nd time, and then sweeping Weld Central 12-2 and 2-0 to avoid a last place finish with a 4-10 record.</p> <p>Coming off back-to-to-back tough seasons in the summer and then in the spring, the Reds fought back into contention by the summer of 1971. The Reds first defeated the Greeley Elks 3-1, and then beat University 7-1. After a loss to Highland, the Reds beat Valley 2-1 in a huge upset, and then after a loss to Longmont, the Reds beat Broomfield 5-4 and then Longmont 7-5. The Reds then lost to Fort Morgan before defeating the Greeley Elks 3-1 in yet another major upset. After losing to University, the Reds beat Valley and Highland to improve to 8-4 in league standings. The Reds then fell to Fort Morgan and Broomfield to end the season, but clearly were moving in the right direction toward returning to the glory experienced nearly a decade earlier.</p>



On a recent recruiting visit, the Reds spoke with a veteran college coach that had experienced victory in the past with a Reds' graduate on his college team, and had suffered defeat competing against Reds' graduates. The Reds were promoting one of their players that had just transferred from Greeley to Eaton as a senior, and the coach asked, in a serious tone, but with a slight smile, "well, is he going to have time to drink enough of that Eaton water to compete like you guys?"

This question is not based solely on the recent successes of the Reds, but based instead on the generations of success that the Reds have experienced. And yes, maybe there is something in the water here that makes Reds battle through every last pitch, often to great victory, but never accepting of defeat even in the rare instances in which the Reds experience it. If however it isn't the town well water that has Eaton play tougher and better under pressure than their opponents, then it must instead be the commitment to victory that the Eaton community has always supported, in every sport, and in every season, for many, many generations now. Eaton athletes are raised to expect to be successful, and to work harder than their opponents to ensure this success.

This was the case for our players back in the 1960's as well, and we Reds that have followed in their footsteps are greatly appreciative of the baseball program that the Reds started more than 50 years ago. The first few years were difficult as would of course be the case for any new public school athletic program. But even those leaner years included great upset victories for the Reds. But within almost no time at all, the Reds were not only defeating the much larger schools from Greeley, Fort Collins, Boulder, and Denver, but the Reds were also winning league titles in both the spring and summer seasons. The Reds then put together a remarkable run all the way to winning the American Legion B State Championship in 1961, in only the Reds' 3rd year of competing in summer baseball.

The Reds then continued to win league championships over the next few seasons, followed by a couple of years where the Reds ended just short of advancing to the postseason in the middle half of the decade. While the latter half of the decade didn't result in additions to the Reds' trophy cases, these players did play spoiler and earned great upset wins. Even more importantly, the Reds started to build a youth baseball program in the latter years of the era Before We Wore Pinstripes. These younger players looked up to and learned from the Reds then playing on the varsity team, and they worked to learn the game and try to grow to play even better once their day came than the older players in the program. This would pay off for the Reds in future years, and future decades, as Eaton continued to rise along a path that has not been experienced by any other town in the country, as the Eaton Fightin' Reds went on to become the winningest baseball program in America.

Thank You to All of The Reds from This Era Before We Wore Pinstripes, Your Contributions to the Eaton Reds Baseball Program Add Significantly to the Legendary History of Our Team

EatonBaseball.com took great pride in researching the early years of the Eaton Baseball Program—it was an honor to track the results of these great teams and players. While researching this information, Reds' graduates were actually hanging on every article as they advanced the microfilm to find out the result of the next game, and made a bit of a scene in the library with the enthusiasm of seeing the Reds win the State Title in 1961. The limited information available however has certainly led to some inadvertent omissions from the record, and we encourage players and their families from this era to e-mail earlyyears@eatonbaseball.com with additions, photos, and so forth so that this era of Eaton Baseball can be represented as well as it deserves to be remembered.