

2000 – 2009

One Proud Decade for the Reds

The late 1950's and 1960's bore witness to the start of baseball in Eaton. The 1970's included the start of the Reds Baseball Program as we now know it, led by Coaches Danley and Ervin, as the Reds made significant strides to the top of the standings by the end of the decade. The 1980's saw the Reds rise to the level of Regional Champions, amidst numerous great upsets over much more talented opposing pitchers and teams. The 1990's will be remembered for the Reds winning the coveted State Championship, and then repeating it, and then winning a summer State Championship, and then going undefeated for another State Championship while setting the state record for consecutive wins. The Reds were becoming a powerhouse. Well, the Reds have continued to improve dramatically each decade, and the Reds put together a decade in the 2000's that has to rank with the best decades of any baseball team in American history.

In only 10 years, the Reds earned...



10 State Championships
6 Spring State Championships
4 Summer State Championships

10 Spring Regional Championships

8 Spring State Championship Game Appearances

90.8% Spring Winning Percentage

5 Summer State Championship Game Appearances

574 Wins – 57 Wins Per Year

228 Spring Wins – 23 Wins Per Spring

346 Summer Wins – 34 Wins Per Summer

239 League Wins

98 Spring League Wins

97.0% Spring League Winning Percentage

141 Summer League Wins

85.5% Summer League Winning Percentage

10 Spring State Tournament Appearances

89.4% Spring State Tournament Win Percentage

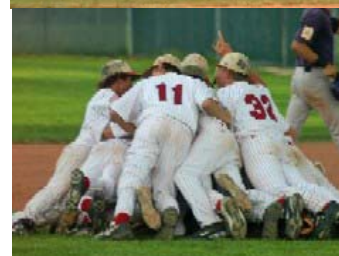
10 Summer State Tournament Appearances

68.8% Summer State Tournament Win Percentage

75 State Tournament Wins

42 Spring State Tournament Wins

33 Summer State Tournament Wins



It's difficult to draw up a better way to end a ridiculously successful decade than with a 13-0 mercy-rule State Championship Game win to complete a perfect 25-0 season that garners the #1 ranking in the nation among schools with an enrollment under 800, and that's exactly what the 2009 Reds accomplished to close out this impressive decade.

Looking back a decade, in 1999, after the Reds had won 45 consecutive games to set the all-time state record, in a decade in which the Reds earned 4 State Championships (3 spring State Titles and 1 summer State Title), a newspaper article asked who the team of the decade was in the area. While the Reds seemed to slightly get the nod in the article, it appeared only with reservation and after mentioning other teams in the area as being relatively on par with the Reds.

The Reds took this personally, and the Reds like a challenge. The Reds then ran off 4 straight State Championships in 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004, while also winning 3 consecutive American Legion State Championships in 2002, 2003, and 2004. The Reds had basically locked up Team of the Decade status only halfway through the decade. The Reds earned likely their most impressive win streak in history, earning 33 consecutive wins in postseason elimination games. With the season on the line, the 33 consecutive wins—many of these games in the summer against larger Class 4A and Class 5A schools—has similar odds of winning 33 consecutive coin flips. Those odds: 1 in 8.5 billion.

The Reds overcame long odds multiple times throughout this postseason streak, including being down by 7 runs with only 6 outs left in the season in 2003. The Reds also were down by 2 runs and down to their final out in another 2003 game, and down by a run when down to their final strike, and yet still came back to win at State. That summer, the Reds were embarrassed in the State Tournament for one of only two times all decade. That 2nd round, 10-run loss though would be avenged, as the Reds came all the way back through the loser's bracket to get the opportunity to face that same team again. This time, the Reds swept them in back-to-back games to win the State Title. After securing another State Title in spring 2004, the Reds lost their 1st round State Tournament game in the summer, losing in their 2nd, and final, embarrassing State Tournament game of the decade. That wasn't a problem though, as the Reds came back through the loser's bracket defeating the team that had beaten the Reds earlier by a 2-1 score, and then swept past the same team as they had in 2002 to win State. By 2008, the Reds simply dominated the postseason, never trailing by a run at any time, and in 2009, the Reds 10-runned nearly every opponent, even in the final games of the State Tournament.

On an individual basis, the Reds had no Major League draft choices in the 1970's—actually the thought of it was absurd back then. The Reds had one Major League draft choice in the 1980's, and one more in the 1990's. The last four years of the 2000's though saw the Major League draft board note Eaton, Colorado as a player's high school on 7 different occasions, with one Red signing in the 6th round, and another drafted in the 15th round, with 5 other Reds' selections occurring in the later rounds. Two more Reds played minor league ball in the mid 2000's, one drafted in the 12th round. The number of college scholarships exploded, as many graduating senior classes had nearly every senior starter advance to top junior college and Division I or II programs, and each graduating class placed at least one player at the next level. The Reds' top-flight players though didn't singularly win all these games and State Championships, as winning with this kind of frequency requires true team efforts, and more than 70 Reds contributed in Varsity games in the 2000's, with 45 everyday starters playing the bulk of their career in this great decade.

Not everything can be perfect, and the Reds sustained some losses in the 2000's. Clearly, by far, the Reds' biggest losses included the death of two former players and a longtime assistant coach, whose love for the Reds followed him to the grave as he chose to be buried in his Eaton uniform. The Reds Baseball Family came together to pay for the funeral costs for one former player, while starting a college scholarship fund for the months-old daughter of the other player. The Reds also tragically lost the son of a former player, and, again, the Reds Baseball Family came together to help take care of one of their own. The Reds Baseball Family also donated to American troops, providing financial assistance both to those currently serving, to pay for their phone calls home, and to wounded American troops—to cover costs for their families to visit their husbands and sons once they returned to American military hospitals from overseas. The Reds were very blessed in 2009 when a Red fully defeated life-threatening cancer.

Winning 10 State Championships in 13 spring and summer State Championship Game Appearances is impressive, but meant that the Reds had near misses at State Championships as well. In 2000, 2005, 2006, and 2007, the Reds were within a key play or a key pitch in the right spot from having an opportunity to secure titles in those years too. The same was true for the Reds in 6 summer State Tournaments, as the Reds' season always ended in the later rounds, and never ended by more than 4 runs, and typically by just 1 or 2 runs. But in truth, with probably only one or maybe two exceptions, the Reds won every State Championship in which they were the best team in the tournament. The Reds also won a number of State Championships in which most would say they had no business even being in the Final Four based on talent, but the Reds would hear none of it, and battled with the expectation of victory in every single game played throughout the decade. This was best exemplified in 2002, when the Reds defeated a senior-laden team that was ranked #1, and did it in impressive fashion, winning 12-0 for the Reds' first mercy-rule victory in the State Championship. In 2001, the Reds outlasted a pitcher that would go on to be drafted in the early rounds of the MLB Draft to win 3-2 in the 15th inning, in the longest game in Colorado State Tournament history, and arguably the top game in Eaton history.

In the spring season, which of course matters the most, the Reds won 9 out of every 10 games played on average throughout the decade. More impressively, the Reds won 9 out of every 10 State Tournament games played throughout the decade. League losses occurred in the spring, but with the same frequency as the opening ceremonies of the Summer Olympic Games—only thrice throughout the decade—as the Reds won 97% of their league games. Even in the summer, the Reds won 9 out of every 10 league games, almost always against much larger Class 4A schools.

The Reds finished within the top 3 teams in the state in 17 of the 20 spring and summer seasons, never finishing below 3rd place in the spring. While every season is a disappointment and failure that doesn't end with a State Championship celebration, in these off years, the Reds still displayed at times the kind of heroics in making it into at least the Final Four, that would help propel these players in the years that followed to go on to win State Championship Rings. And win they did, throughout the decade, earning 10 State Titles in 10 years, marking the best decade in Eaton history.



No senior class has graduated without at least one State Championship Ring since the early 1990's, and some players have left Eaton with literally more than a handful of Rings, some with 6 Rings, many with 4 or 5 Rings, and every one with at least 1 Ring.