

TWO WEEKS IN PINSTripES

Introduction: There are only a few teams in the nation in which the success of an entire season is measured simply by the answer to the question: Did you win the final game? Only a handful of teams actually appear in that final game year in and year out, and fewer still win it more often than not. There is only one team that also faces the additional pressure of having the highest winning percentage in the nation over the last quarter-century, and winning the most state titles of any public school in America since the Reds won their first State Title in 1994. Playing under pressure is simply a given at Eaton, where the Denver television cameras are rolling even during some practices, as well as of course in the big games. Fear of failure exists in the Reds' dugout, as it should, but to much less of an extent than in most dugouts. And this fear is outweighed by the fact that the Reds take the field every time knowing that things have worked out for them in the past on more occasions than not, and that their predecessors in Pinstripes accomplished feats that, while nearly impossible to ever best, are still ones that they too can strive to equal. The feats of the Reds' past will never fade in their glory, but it is quite possible that no period of two consecutive weeks was ever greater than what the Reds accomplished at the end of the summer of 2010.

The game before the start of the Reds' *Two Weeks in Pinstripes* is one that would be remembered by most teams as the top game of their season, maybe even their players' careers. In that game, the Reds won in walk-off fashion as an Eaton 8th grader stepped up and roped a ball to deep centerfield in the bottom of the 9th inning to knock in the winning run. The Reds would play so tough and so well over the next two weeks though, that this game doesn't even make the cut for this article.

Saturday, July 17th

In only the Reds' 2nd year in the Northern Colorado Baseball League (NCBL), the Reds once again had swept through the league standings with a 19-2 record to secure the #1 seed for the postseason. That gave the Reds the advantage of hosting one of the four 4-team pools, and allowed the Reds to automatically be the home team for each game. Given the Reds' remarkably poor record of success in winning coin flips, this was quite rare for the Reds to play more postseason games as the home team than as visitors.

The Reds started the tournament by facing Class 5A Fort Collins. After falling behind 2-0 in the top of the 4th inning—and using wood bats which make it much more difficult to put together “that one inning” where the Reds explode for many runs to put games away, as the Reds are known to do with great frequency—the Reds started the bottom of the 4th inning with Keenan Hall singling to lead off the inning. Then Weston Hager drew a one-out walk, and Dante Foos singled before Seth Jackson doubled to give the Reds a 3-2 lead. Tyler Sieg then knocked in Jackson with two outs to increase the lead to 4-2. Sieg then struck out two batters before giving way to Jackson to retire the final batter of the 5th inning. Jackson then retired 6 of the game's final 7 batters. This was only a mild comeback, executed still early (in the 4th inning) with each Red having at least one more at-bat if they didn't get the job done now, but the Reds took care of business right here, and moved on to the following day with a 1-0 record in pool play.

Sunday, July 18th Game One

The Reds entered the day needing to beat Class 4A Windsor in the morning to continue to control their own destiny for advancing to the Final Four. The winner of this four-team tournament between Eaton, Fort Collins, Windsor and Erie would advance to face 3 other teams in a single-elimination tournament a few days later, and the Reds started off July 18th knowing that a loss to Windsor could mean the end of Eaton's season in the NCBL, as Windsor was also 1-0 coming into the game. Again trailing by 2 runs, this time in the 2nd inning, the Reds rallied as Tyler Sieg singled, Cory Dyer singled, Bryce Dyer reached on a fielder's choice, and then Keenan Hall reached on a 2-out error before Brandon Koehler singled, Weston Hager singled, Dante Foos walked, and Seth Jackson reached base to give the Reds a 4-2 lead. The lead though only held until the 5th inning, when Windsor chipped their way back into a tie game. By the bottom of the 6th inning though, the Reds managed to take a 2-run lead as Bryce Dyer singled, Hall walked, and then Hager singled with two outs to give the Reds the lead, before Foos reached on an error to give the Reds a 2-run advantage. In the top of the 7th inning though, Windsor tied the game and threatened to take the lead with the bases loaded and no outs. With the infield drawn in to cut down the potential go-ahead run at the plate, shortstop Hager then snagged a line drive and threw to third baseman Bryce Dyer for the double play. Bryce Dyer then fielded a ground ball and threw across the field to first baseman Cory Dyer to end the scoring threat. Then in the bottom of the 7th inning, Tyler Sieg singled and pinch runner Marcus Longwell advanced to 2nd base on a wild pitch. Then with one out, Bryce Dyer flew out to deep centerfield, and Longwell tagged to advance to 3rd base. The throw from centerfield though was high and landed in the Reds' 3rd base dugout, thereby sending Longwell to the plate with the game-winning run.

Sunday, July 18th Game Two

Class 4A Erie matched up against the Reds for the pool championship, with both teams entering the game with records of 2-0. For the 3rd straight game, the Reds fell behind early, this time 1-0 in the top of the 1st inning, before Weston Hager singled, advanced to 2nd base on a grounder hit by Dante Foos, and then scored on a single by Tyler Batt to tie the game. The Reds then fell behind 3-1 in the 3rd inning, and continued to trail until the 6th inning. Tyler Sieg walked, and then with two outs, Keenan Hall and Brandon Koehler walked, and Weston Hager singled to tie the game on a 3-2, 2-out pitch. The Reds though fell behind again by a run in the top of the 7th inning, before pitcher Foos induced a groundout to Cory Dyer to strand runners on 1st and 3rd base to end the top half of the inning. With the NCBL season on the line, Tyler Batt hit a one-out double. Courtesy runner Marcus Longwell then scored on a single by Tyler Sieg to tie the game. Pinch runner Tanner Garretson then advanced to third base as Cory Dyer reached on an error and took 2nd base. Erie then intentionally walked Bryce Dyer to load the bases. With two outs, the Reds put in pinch hitter Trent Sieg, and he hit the first pitch fastball into deep leftfield for the game-winner. This was the Reds' 2nd walk-off victory of the day, and advanced the Reds to the NCBL Final Four.

Monday, July 19th

The Reds learned they would face the winner of the #4-seeded pool, Roosevelt, in the semifinals, and #2 Fossil Ridge would face #3 Thompson Valley. All games were scheduled to be played at Eaton the following day, as the Reds had secured the top record throughout the entire league the previous week.

Tuesday, July 20th Game One

The afternoon started with Class 5A Fossil Ridge defeating Class 4A Thompson Valley to advance to the NCBL Championship Game under the lights that evening. But before that Championship Game could be played, the Reds faced Class 4A Roosevelt with the winner advancing to face Fossil Ridge for the title. With two outs and no one on base in the 1st inning, Seth Jackson walked, Tyler Batt doubled, and Tyler Sieg singled to give the Reds a 2-0 lead. Tyler Sieg then retired Roosevelt in order in the top of the 2nd inning, before Trent Sieg, Weston Hager, and Dante Foos hit consecutive singles to make the score 3-0, and then Jackson knocked in one more run to make it a 4-0 lead. Tyler Sieg allowed just one hit per inning over the next two innings to keep Roosevelt scoreless, before Jackson hit a two-out single and came around to score on a passed ball in the 4th inning to give the Reds a 5-0 lead. Jackson then took the mound and retired the side in order in the 5th inning, before Keenan Hall, Trent Sieg and Weston Hager hit consecutive singles to increase the Reds' lead to 7-0. Though Roosevelt came back to score 4 runs in the 6th inning, Jackson induced the potential tying run to pop up to shortstop Hager to end the top of the inning, before Jackson then led off the bottom half of the frame with a triple and scored on a sacrifice fly from Tyler Sieg. Jackson then induced a double play turned by 2nd baseman Brandon Koehler to shortstop Hager to 1st baseman Cory Dyer before striking out the final batter of the game to preserve the 8-4 win and advance the Reds to face Class 5A Fossil Ridge for the NCBL Championship Game.

Tuesday, July 20th Game Two – NCBL Championship Game

When the Reds take on Class 5A teams, the Reds are often much physically smaller than their counterparts. The Reds won't look as good in the gym or on the beach, and wouldn't stand a chance in a postgame brawl. That said, baseball's a different game, and what the Reds lack in physical size, can be more than made up for with other characteristics such as confidence, determination, and discipline at the plate. The Greeley Tribune would refer to the battle the following day as a David vs. Goliath type of match-up. It's quite possible that the Reds honestly didn't know what heavy underdogs they were entering this game. The Reds' coaching staff though had to be realistic and ensure that the team did not expend all of its pitching on Tuesday, thereby risking failure in the upcoming Legion B District Tournament starting only 36 hours after this game.

With an already tired pitching staff coming into the game, the Reds started sophomore pitcher Keenan Hall, one of the few fresh arms available. Hall's older brother, Logan, holds one of Eaton's all-time amazing records, having gone 42-0 lifetime on the mound as a starting pitcher, including throwing many of the Reds' biggest spring and summer games en route to 3 State Championships and a state-record 60-game winning streak in spring games. Now it was time for the younger Hall to leave his mark in a Reds' championship game.

After Hall retired 3 of 4 batters in the scoreless top of the 1st inning, the Reds then scored the game's first run as Dante Foos reached on a fielder's choice and then came around to score on a wild pitch with two outs. After allowing two consecutive hit-by-pitches to start the top of the 2nd inning, Hall then struck out the next 3 batters in order to end the scoring threat. The Reds then fell behind 2-1 in the top of the 3rd inning, but Hall struck out the final batter on a 3-2 pitch to strand two runners on base and limit the damage. The Reds quickly tied the game back up though, as Brandon Koehler drew a one-out walk, and then after a two-out walk by Foos, Seth Jackson singled to tie the game at 2-2. Hall then recorded two outs in the 4th inning before giving way to reliever Foos. After a single by Fossil Ridge's #3 hitter gave them a 3-2 lead over the Reds, Foos struck out the clean-up hitter to strand two runners in scoring position. Foos retired the side in order in the 5th inning on just 10 pitches. Koehler then drew a lead-off walk and pinch runner McKyler Korth took his spot as the potential tying run. Weston Hager next took a 1-2 pitch for a hit-by-pitch. Foos then grounded out, but advanced the runners to 2nd and 3rd base. Despite there being a base open, Jackson's history of key hits in these types of situations obviously hadn't reached the Class 5A scouting reports, and Fossil Ridge pitched to him with one out. The first pitch Jackson saw though he roped for a single that not only tied the game, but also scored Hager to give the Reds a 4-3 lead. Foos then took the mound in the 6th inning and retired 3 of 4 batters, striking out Fossil Ridge's #2 hitter with the potential tying run on 2nd base to end the inning. Then in the 7th inning, carrying only a 1-run lead, and facing 3 of the biggest, strongest, and most-talented opposing hitters that the Reds would battle against all summer, Foos induced a popout to first baseman Cory Dyer in foul territory. Foos then struck out the clean-up hitter on 4 pitches. With the Championship on the line, even after falling behind in the count, Foos induced a groundout to shortstop Jackson to end the game and give the Reds their first Wood Bat Championship.

This game had been played under the lights, and was only the 2nd time in Reds' history that they won the final game of a postseason on their own field, as typically championships are held at neutral sites. Knowing that any pitch that missed its mark could be hit off the fence, if not over it, by these Fossil Ridge hitters, the feeling was electric as the Reds' dugout, the players on the field, and the fans in the stands hung on to every pitch. Both teams' dugouts were loud and clearly into the game. Every pitcher in the Reds' arsenal was fighting to try to get into this game, as pitchers all warmed up in between innings, promising the Reds' coaching staff that they had at least one more inning in them. The adrenaline was certainly running high. Bullpen catcher Colton Lind must have caught over 100 warm-up pitches in the final few innings, as every Reds' pitcher, some who hadn't even been told to go warm-up, fought to find a way into the game. The Reds sensed even at the time that this was a special ballgame and likely understood deep down that this could be a legendary victory. Mainly though, the Reds' players just wanted to find a way to win the thing, to beat their opponents. Right here, right now. And the Reds did just that, earning a remarkable championship. The Reds are the only Class 3A team even allowed into this Class 4A and 5A league, and yet with this win, the Reds showed they certainly could play with any team in northern Colorado, an area from which the vast majority of Class 3A, 4A, and 5A State Championships have been won over the past decade.

Though even when it was all over, and Goliath fell at the hands of David, there was no pile-up on the mound and there was no Gatorade bucket with Coach Danley's name on it for a cold shower at the hands of the players. The Reds were excited, no question of that, but they settled for mere handshakes,

as deep down, the Reds knew that there had been only 14 pile-ups in Eaton history, and each of them came after a victory in the season's final game in the State Championship. This championship was special, and it earned a spot on Eaton's outfield walls with yet another banner, but a pile-up would have to wait for another week and a half, as the Reds had a great deal of business to take care of before their season could truly be measured a success. The Reds' coaching staff debated after the game whether this title was even better than a Legion B State Championship, at which point Coach Ervin matter-of-factly ended the conversation by just saying, "well, we're going to win both of them, so let's just decide then".

Wednesday, July 21st

The Reds had one of the first days off since a long 4th of July weekend, trying to garner whatever rest they could before the Legion B District Tournament started the following morning at Roosevelt.

Thursday, July 22nd

With a depleted pitching staff after the 5 NCBL games since Saturday, the Reds handed the ball to first baseman and less-regularly used pitcher Cory Dyer to take on their only Class 3A opponent of the postseason, Valley. The Reds had two goals entering the District Tournament: 1) qualify for State by winning two games prior to losing two games, and 2) if possible, try to earn a reasonable seed by finishing toward the top of the teams playing. The 1st goal was all that really mattered, but the 2nd goal would become important once the 1st goal was accomplished. Of course the Reds would try to win every game played, but with a tired pitching staff, there was a limit to how far the Reds would push things knowing that 4 of the 8 District Tournament teams would advance to the following weekend's State Tournament.

The visiting Reds scored 3 runs in the first inning, as Weston Hager singled, stole 2nd base, and then scored on a two-out hit by Tyler Batt, followed by a single from Tyler Sieg and then a double by Cory Dyer. Valley then went down in order at the hands of Cory Dyer in the bottom of the 1st inning, before the Reds put the game away in the top of the 2nd inning as each batter in the lineup reached base and the Reds increased their lead to 12-0. Cory Dyer then retired the side in order in the 3rd inning, and recorded an out in the 4th inning before finally allowing his first hit of the day, but then retiring the next two batters to end the inning. Skyler Dixon then entered in relief and faced only 3 batters in the 5th inning aided by a game-ending double-play as the Reds won 14-0 via the mercy rule. Tyler Sieg hit his first home run of the season in the 4th inning, but the Reds' dugout gave him the cold shoulder and did not go out to celebrate the home run. In fact, the Reds on-deck batters looked away and no one mentioned anything about the home run as he returned a bit bewildered to the bench, before one of the players finally, in their best Coach Danley impersonation, said "Come on Sieg, you gotta hit the ball on the ground." The Reds were about where they needed to be mentally, coming out of the gates very focused and determined early, but still loose enough to play well.

This win not only guaranteed the Reds that they had to win just one of the next two games, but Cory Dyer's near no-hit performance through 4 innings also allowed the Reds to rest their other pitchers to let them all be available for short stints the following day to advance the Reds to State.

Friday, July 23rd

Rain late in the day on Thursday had pushed back the tournament schedule, and forced the Reds' game against Class 4A Roosevelt to be played under the lights at their JV field, as their top high school field doesn't have lights. This was the first time in history that the Reds had played under the lights at Roosevelt, or even had ever played on this field. It would become a memorable one.

Despite the game being played at Roosevelt, the Reds won the coin flip and were the home team. Tyler Sieg retired the first 6 batters of the game, and then in the bottom of the 2nd inning, Tyler Batt reached base, Tyler Sieg walked and Cory Dyer tripled to give the Reds a 2-0 lead. Brandon Koehler then took a hit by pitch, and Dallas Schrieber reached on an error and Hager singled to give the Reds a 4-0 lead. Roosevelt rallied to score 3 runs in the top of the 3rd inning, before Sieg struck out the final batter with the bases loaded to keep the Reds ahead at the time. Roosevelt however then scored 2 runs in the 4th inning to take a 5-4 lead. Dante Foos came in and shut down Roosevelt going into the 7th inning.

The environment was heated throughout the game, as the stands were filled with fans from both sides, and a number of close calls went to Roosevelt. After a balk was called against the Reds in the top of the 7th inning to move an insurance run into scoring position for Roosevelt, Coach Danley had had enough and argued strenuously, leading to his ejection from the game. It is an exaggeration that his plastic helmet bounced 30 times, there's no way those things can bounce more than about 20 times.

A single two batters later gave Roosevelt a 6-4 lead going into the bottom of the 7th inning. Roosevelt changed pitchers to bring in their closer, but leadoff hitter Weston Hager hit a 2-2 pitch for a single to lead off the inning. Then with one out, Seth Jackson doubled to pull the Reds within a run. Tyler Batt then scorched a 1-2 pitch that got through the infield and pinch runner McKyler Korth was waved home by Coach Ervin at 3rd base to score and tie the game and send it into extra innings. In the top of the 8th inning, Foos fielded a comeback groundball to end a scoring threat. Bryce Dyer then led off the bottom half of the inning by taking a 2-strike hit-by-pitch, Koehler then walked on a full-count, and Trent Sieg hit an infield single to load the bases. Hager then grounded the ball to shortstop and the throw home wasn't fielded cleanly as Bryce Dyer slid home safely with the game's winning run. This guaranteed the Reds a spot in the State Tournament, after securing the 2-run come-from-behind win.

Saturday, July 24th

Having already accomplished their major goals for the week: 1) win the NCBL Tournament and 2) advance in Districts far enough to qualify for State, the Reds were now effectively playing with house money. The day started with an incorrect ruling that Coach Danley wouldn't be allowed to coach again in this tournament, which ran at odds with tournament rules and decades of precedent. Once this issue was resolved, the Reds then faced Class 5A Greeley West and despite a late rally that brought the potential tying run for the Reds into the on-deck circle, the Reds were defeated 10-5.

Sunday, July 25th Game One

The Reds' day started not at Roosevelt, but in Boulder, as the Reds' coaching staff watched the Metro District Tournament Championship in the morning, which yielded a surprising upset win by Peak-to-Peak over league champion and highly-regarded Monarch. With the #1 seed from the Northern District facing the #2 seed from the Metro District in the 2nd round at the State Tournament the next week, this upset meant that the winner of the Northern District Tournament would actually have to face one of the top teams in the tournament, and the host team, in the 2nd round. With this information in hand, and with the Reds having already provided a number of their pitchers to help the Legion C team at their State Tournament, after facing a couple of injuries on that squad, the Reds showed up Sunday focused on winning the first game to garner at least the #2 seed, and then just see what happened later in the day.

The Reds first faced Sterling, and emotions were high after a Reds' first baseman had had his Achilles' tendon landed on by a Sterling player on a routine play in a Legion C game a couple weeks earlier. Sterling's first two batters scored, but then in the bottom of the 1st inning, Weston Hager and Dante Foos reached and scored after a balk, a wild pitch, and a fielder's choice hit by Tyler Batt. After Sterling took a 5-2 lead in the top of the 3rd inning, Hager and Foos again led off by reaching base and scoring on a single by Batt to bring the Reds within a run at 5-4.

Brandon Koehler, who had come on in relief in the 3rd inning to induce an infield popout to end the inning, then stranded a leadoff runner in the 4th inning at 3rd base as well to keep the score 5-4. Bryce Dyer then led off the bottom of the 4th inning with a double on the first pitch that he saw, and then after Koehler walked, Hager and Foos also walked, and Jackson reached on a fielder's choice before Batt took a hit-by-pitch for another run as the Reds pulled ahead 7-5. Foos then entered in relief and ended the 5th inning without allowing a run. In the top of the 6th inning, Sterling scored a run to cut the Reds lead to one run, and then on a 2-out, bases-loaded, 0-2 pitch tried to steal home.

In such a situation, Coach Danley tells pitchers to still throw whatever pitched they had gripped, rather than trying to change it to a fastball at the last second, as that could lead to wildness. On this pitch, Foos learned early enough that the runner was going, that he changed his grip to a fastball though and threw it right down the middle of the plate. Reds' catcher Tyler Batt though, assuming a slider would still be thrown, dropped down and slid out in anticipation of the sharp break, and ended up not even getting a glove on the ball as it crossed the plate for a called strike. While Sterling celebrated, thinking they had scored the tying run, Batt alertly picked up the ball against the backstop and tagged the batter who never left the batter's box on the odd play. That created a force out situation that took the run off the board, and kept the Reds in the lead by a run. Batt's knowledge of the rulebook and coolness under pressure certainly paid off on this play, as it did throughout the period of Two Weeks in Pinstripes.

The Reds then added two more runs in the bottom of the 6th inning to put the game away, before Foos retired Sterling in order in the 7th inning to send the Reds on to the District Championship Game and guarantee the Reds no lower than the #2 seed from the North the following week at State.

Sunday, July 25th Game Two

Given the fact that the Reds had already picked up the seed they wanted for the State Tournament, especially in light of the upset win earlier in the day in the Metro Districts, the Reds chose to rest their more-experienced pitchers and use sophomore Skyler Dixon instead, who only allowed 4 runs through the first 3 innings, but then Greeley West took a big lead and eventually won 14-4 to wrap up the District Tournament. But the Reds had accomplished their goal for the weekend, and stood poised to garner some rest for their pitchers and get ready to take on the state's top 7 opponents in the State Tournament the next weekend.

Monday, July 26th

The Reds had a rare day off in between the District and State Tournaments.

Tuesday, July 27th

The Reds hit on their own, again having a day of rest before getting ready for the State Tournament.

Wednesday, July 28th

The Reds met to discuss the upcoming State Tournament and to work on their pickoff plays. Coach Danley started by commending the Reds for their toughness up to this point, and their success in scoring the runs they needed once they got into a dogfight. Coach Danley though reminded the Reds that these comebacks could be ended by an unfortunate line drive right at somebody, and the Reds must thus come out of the gates right away, comparing them to the way that the legendary horse Seabiscuit was managed—come out strong and take a lead, and if someone catches up to you later on, then that's when we're at our best—when we're in the final stretch looking our opponent eye-to-eye as we make a final charge.

Thursday, July 29th

Tyler Sieg started off the State Tournament by retiring the first 3 Class 5A Boulder batters in order in the bottom of the 1st inning. Sieg recorded two strikeouts in the 2nd inning and one more in the 3rd inning, as he went through the lineup perfectly through 3 innings, not allowing a ball out of the infield, and without allowing a run through the first 4 innings.

The Reds took a 1-0 lead over Boulder in the top of the 5th inning, as Weston Hager walked, Dante Foos singled, Seth Jackson took a hit-by-pitch, and pitcher Tyler Sieg took a bases-loaded hit-by-pitch to score the first run of the game. Then in the bottom of the 5th inning though, Foos took the mound with no outs and the bases loaded to face Boulder's tough left-handed hitters. Foos allowed a two-out single that gave Boulder a 2-1 lead, but Foos limited the potential damage and got out of the inning after that. The Reds were now at risk of having to come back all the way through the loser's bracket, needing to win 6 straight games, if the Reds were to lose this opening round game. The Reds came back though in the top of the 6th inning as Bryce Dyer doubled, Keenan Hall, Trent Sieg and Weston Hager singled, Foos reached on an error, and then Seth Jackson, Tyler Batt, and Tyler Sieg singled as the Reds took a commanding 8-2 lead. Tyler Sieg then re-took the mound to keep innings off of Dante Foos, who was

scheduled to pitch the next day. Sieg retired the side in order in the 6th inning, and then after allowing two runs in the 7th inning, retired the game's final 3 batters in order to send the Reds on to the 2nd round of the State Tournament.

With 8 of the Reds' first 12 outs occurring via flyout or strikeout, the Reds were told by their coaching staff after the game that this wasn't good enough, and wasn't going to get the players past these next opponents if the effort and focus didn't improve significantly. The Reds can't be unique in approaching the game of baseball in this way, as the Reds don't set goals of trying to win games, seriously. Every Red can tell you of being verbally blasted for an hour and a half after a sloppy 14-4 victory, while not hearing hardly a peep after suffering a hard-fought, well-played 5-4 loss. The Reds simply focus on playing the game right, and playing it hard, and if you do those things, victories usually take care of themselves—victories are merely a way of proving that you did in fact play the game better and harder than your opponent. Baseball is the only sport in the world in which when you're on offense, you don't get to have the ball, but the other guy gets the ball. So you can't tell Michael Jordan to go make the shot to win the game or tell John Elway to go lead the team down the field to win the game—the game of baseball simply can't just be won by taking over offensively late in a game, it's not all within the control of the team on offense, it can only be played the way that it was designed to be played, and as long as the bounces don't go against you, you should come out with a victory in the end if you've outplayed your opponent. Winning at the game of baseball is not dissimilar to a gambler that's good at counting cards winning at blackjack, you can never be certain of winning in any one hand, you can only play the odds and give yourself the most opportunities for victory.

Friday, July 30th

The Reds awoke to read in the newspaper that Greeley West had proclaimed that they would be piling up on Sunday, indicating a sweep through the tournament. There was nothing the Reds could do about this great bulletin board material though today, as they faced Northridge first, and it wouldn't be until tomorrow when the Reds could at least stall out the victory party for Greeley West.

Facing a hard-throwing opponent that had been saved back on Day 1 to face the Reds on Day 2, the Reds fell behind 1-0 through 2 innings. Keenan Hall though led off the top of the 3rd inning with a first-pitch single, then Trent Sieg singled, Weston Hager doubled and Dante Foos singled to give the Reds a 2-1 lead. Foos then stranded two runners on base in the bottom of the 3rd inning, before Cory Dyer tripled to lead off the third inning, and then scored on a single by Hall, followed by Trent Sieg reaching base and then Weston Hager singling to give the Reds a 4-1 lead. Over the past few years, the Reds have been blessed with future MLB draft picks that could simply put an end to games once handed a lead. However the 2010 Reds were more of a team that required everyone to do their job, knowing that the Reds' pitching staff couldn't just strike out everyone as the Reds had experienced in previous years.

In the bottom of the 4th inning, a 3-run home run put Northridge ahead of the Reds 6-4. The Reds though responded quickly as Tyler Batt singled, Tyler Sieg doubled, Cory Dyer drew a walk, and Bryce Dyer then drove in a run before Hall singled to tie the game at 6-6. Hager and Jackson and Cory Dyer turned a great double play to end a scoring threat in the 5th inning, before the Reds exploded for 8 runs in the top of the 6th inning to put the game away. Pitcher Foos took a hit-by-pitch and then consecutive

singles were hit by Jackson, Batt, Tyler Sieg, Cory Dyer, Bryce Dyer, Hall, and Trent Sieg, before Hager walked and Jackson singled as the Reds took a commanding 14-6 lead. Foos allowed just one run in the inning and retired the side in order in the 7th inning to end the game. Up next: Greeley West and a shot to prevent them from being in a position to pile-up on Sunday with a Reds' win on Saturday.

Saturday, July 31st

The Reds faced Greeley West with the winner advancing to the State Championship Game and having to be defeated twice to not win State, with the loser of this game having to go beat host Monarch and then come back to defeat the winner of this game twice to claim the State Championship. Clearly the Reds were focused on the former and not the latter. The Reds have typically come back through the loser's bracket to win their Summer State Championships, however in this Tournament, the Reds faced a field condition at Monarch in which the slope of the field made the height of the mound negligible, significantly hurting pitchers' ability to throw breaking pitches, which need to be thrown on a slope and not on effectively flat ground. The Reds knew this was a big game to win, and a win today would mean the Reds could then rest their sidearmers Dante Foos and Tyler Sieg on Sunday to return on Monday for the State Championship "If" Game if needed. Greeley West predicted in the newspaper on Saturday that they would 10-run the Reds today...the Reds had other thoughts in mind.

Weston Hager led off with a single and then scored the game's first run after singles from Dante Foos and Seth Jackson. Tyler Sieg then retired the side in order in the bottom of the 1st inning. In the 2nd inning, the Reds increased the lead to 2-0 after Keenan Hall reached base followed by singles from Trent Sieg, Hager and Foos. Then in the 3rd inning, the Reds made the score 3-0 as Bryce Dyer doubled home Cory Dyer. In the bottom of the 4th inning, Greeley West tied the game before Foos entered in relief and induced a double play followed by another groundout to keep the game tied. In the bottom of the 5th inning, Cory Dyer fielded a ground ball and threw out the potential go-ahead run trying to score, with Batt applying the tag to end the scoring threat. In the top of the 6th inning, the Reds took a 4-3 lead as Weston Hager led off with a single, stole 2nd base, and then scored on a single by Batt. With the sun starting to set on the Monarch field, which doesn't have lights, Greeley West scored one run to tie the game at 4-4, before Foos struck out a batter to end the inning and send the game into extra innings. As the strikeout was recorded, there became a long delay as a Greeley West player was ejected from the game and their coach argued with the umpires as the sun started to set...this would come into play the following day and work to the Reds' favor. Foos had just thrown his 12th inning within 3 days, and was not eligible to pitch into the 8th inning, so the Reds warmed-up Tyler Sieg to re-enter for the 8th inning.

As darkness started to set in, the umpires declared in advance that the 8th inning would be the final inning played of the day. Hager then led off with another single, Foos walked, and Jackson doubled to give the Reds a 5-4 lead. With a chance to wrap up the game, a 2-out liner was hit just out of the reach of the Reds and led to yet another tie, as Tyler Sieg recorded a strikeout to end the inning, now sending it into a 9th inning, though everyone would have to wait until the following day to wrap up this game as it was now truly dark outside.

Sunday, August 1st Game One (completion of suspended game)

At batting practice in Eaton, the Reds were reminded that this was a great opportunity, and the Reds were going to go all out to go try to take this game. The Reds had a number of things in their favor: 1) being the visitors in an extra-inning game, the Reds would never have to tie up this game, every time we batted, we would be trying to take the lead, not just trying to tie it up, so any mistakes we're going to make are aggressive mistakes as we go right after this thing; 2) by having this be a new calendar day, Dante Foos received one inning back on his innings' limit to be able to throw the bottom of the 9th inning, which he couldn't have done the day before, but now he could go close them out if we score in the top of the inning; and 3) a number of other small scouting advantages that the Reds will keep to themselves.

The Reds had never been in this situation before of completing a State Tournament game on the following day, yet the Reds handled it as something that they must do all the time. Bryce Dyer drilled a 1-2 pitch for a leadoff single. Then after advancing to 2nd base on a wild pitch, Keenan Hall perfectly hit a groundball to the right side to advance the runner to 3rd base with one out. Trent Sieg then played the hero with a single to score the go-head run in the 9th inning. The Reds were in their 3rd straight inning with a lead, and this time, Foos struck out the first batter, induced an infield popout to 2nd baseman Hager, and then induced a groundout to shortstop Jackson to end the game and advance the Reds to the State Championship Game, to be played later the same day.

Sunday, August 1st Game Two

The Reds entered this game with an opportunity to win the State Championship, but even if the Reds lost, they still would get another shot the next day since the Reds entered this game undefeated in the State Tournament, having already handed Greeley West a loss. There were disadvantages that the Reds' knuckle curveball pitchers faced at this field, and the Reds' inability to throw a breaking pitch that was swung at and missed put the onus on the Reds' defense that performed less than spectacularly on this day, but in the spirit of Coach Danley's line in dealing with handling losses in the media of "don't complain, don't explain", it will only be noted that when a team plays as many games as the Reds do, there is that one inning out there in which everything will go wrong and the opponents will score runs in huge numbers. The Reds hadn't had an inning even remotely like this in over a decade and in nearly 6,000 innings played, but this day unfortunately had the Reds post their worst inning in recent history, as 4 Reds' pitchers allowed 19 runs in the 1st inning, with a spate of hits, errors, and a few walks scattered in as well. Greeley West was clearly the better team on this day, as they went on to win 23-0 in 5 innings. But double-elimination tournament brackets are designed as they are to give the previously undefeated team an opportunity to come back the following day and still win the whole thing. Greeley West would have to be better than Eaton on two consecutive days, and the Reds had no intention of allowing that to happen. During this outright drubbing, one Red starter returned to the dugout and said "come on guys, this is embarrassing". He was quickly corrected though by the Reds' coaching staff that "no, this isn't embarrassing, what's embarrassing is to win by this much today, and then go out and lose to us tomorrow for the Championship, now that will be embarrassing; this is just one of those things we'll laugh about one day." No one can know the future, but that was actually the expectation the Reds had for the following day, to go win another State Championship.

Monday, August 2nd – Legion B State Championship Game

To their credit, the Reds didn't need to really have much said to them before heading out to go face Class 5A Greeley West for the winner-take-all State Championship Game on this day. Coach Ervin spoke to the players during batting practice and again briefly before the game along with Coach Danley. The Reds though were focused, and ready to go win another State Championship. The Reds had drawn the curtain behind them from the results of the previous day, and were ready to go win another big game. That's what is expected of the Reds, and that is what the Reds planned on doing.

When the Reds got to the field at Monarch High School, they saw Coach Sparkman get out of his car in full uniform to come join the Reds in the dugout. Coach Sparkman's schedule as a firefighter prevents him from making many summer games, as he takes his time off of work to be there in spring games. Nothing was said about it by Coach Sparkman, or anyone else in the Reds' dugout, but clearly after being completely dominated the day before by a score of 23-0, having Coach Sparkman take time off to come join the Reds in the dugout for this game was just one more subtle vote of confidence that yesterday was yesterday, and of course we plan on playing great and winning this thing today.

Following the defeat the day before, the Reds determined they wanted to be visitors and put pressure on Greeley West early in the game. The Reds fortunately didn't have to risk offending the baseball gods by winning the coin flip and then still choosing to be visitors, and instead simply were lucky to have lost the coin flip straight up and became the visitors that way.

The Reds led off the first inning with Weston Hager drawing a full-count walk. Dante Foos then singled, and Seth Jackson tripled to score them both. Tyler Sieg then singled to give the Reds a 3-0 lead in the top of the 1st inning. The Reds started Tyler Sieg on the mound, knowing that he and Foos would need to split up the game. Both pitchers had thrown a great deal in the tournament, but their arms were strong, neither were complaining of soreness or were risking injury, and both wanted the ball without question and were legally allowed to each throw 7 innings. The Reds' defense didn't perform as expected in the first inning, and the Reds went to go get Foos right away. Foos led the Reds out of the inning and limited the damage to having the Reds trail 7-3 after one inning.

After a rough first inning in which the Reds' youngest starter made a throwing error and allowed an infield single in front of him, Foos quickly went to him after the inning and explained, "Hey, you're the best 8th grader in the State, and the only one that's still playing ball right now, this is your first State Championship and these things happen when you're young, but forget about that inning and go help us win the next 6 innings". This veteran leadership paid off, as that 8th grader would go on to play flawlessly the rest of the game, making a couple of great diving catches, making every throw, and helping lead the Reds on offense with two hits and a sacrifice fly as well.

The Reds didn't score in the 2nd inning, but neither did Greeley West as Foos retired the side in order. Foos announced to the team, "they're done scoring...they're done, just get me 5 more runs." The Reds started chipping away at the 4-run deficit in the 3rd inning as Jackson, Batt and Tyler Sieg singled to get the Reds within 3 runs. Foos then retired the side in order again in the bottom of the 3rd inning.

In the 4th inning, the Reds stranded a couple runners and failed to score, but Foos also stranded a runner and kept the score at 7-4, in favor of Greeley West after 4 innings.

With 3 innings remaining in the Reds' season, and trailing by 3 runs, the Reds led off the 5th inning with Cory Dyer hitting a one-out home run over the rightfield fence. Bryce Dyer then singled, before Trent Sieg hit a two-out double to bring the Reds within a run. Hager and Foos then walked, before Jackson singled to tie the game and Batt singled to give the Reds a 9-7 lead. Foos then went 3-up, 3-down again against Greeley West in the 5th inning. In the top of the 6th inning, Bryce Dyer singled with two outs, and then Keenan Hall singled, Trent Sieg walked, and Hager singled to give the Reds a 12-7 lead.

Foos then retired the first two batters of the 6th inning, to record his 16th out amongst the past 17 batters to step to the plate. Then after a walk, Foos induced a groundout to shortstop Jackson to end the inning. The Reds didn't score in the top of the 7th inning, but handed the ball to Foos to complete his 20th and final inning allowed in the tournament. After a couple of hit-by-pitches and a hit loaded the bases with one out, Foos ended the game with two strikeouts, sending the Reds to a State Championship pileup, and completing arguably the greatest two-week period in Eaton Baseball history.

For all who lived it, this was truly a spectacular **Two Weeks in Pinstripes**. A few things were immediately clear as the Reds stood back up from their pile-up celebration. It was nothing less than legendary that the Reds held down an opponent to zero runs in the final 6 innings of the State Championship Game after that opponent had scored over 160 runs in the District and State Tournaments. Foos' MVP performance in the 20 innings he pitched in the State Tournament was not unlike the performance of Reds' immortals such as 6-time State Champion Dusty Dominguez. The Reds players and coaches never felt like underdogs on Monday, despite having lost 23-0 the day before to this opponent, but the passage of time will likely allow the Reds to fully appreciate the historic nature of such a comeback the following day. The Reds two-week stretch yielded wins over the very top Class 4A teams in the entire State, and many of the top Class 5A teams as well. The Reds came from behind in 10 postseason games, often in the late innings, with victories in the final inning of all 4 games that were close going into the final inning. Being the home team in most games, the Reds often had their final at-bat in the 6th inning, and in the 6th inning of the 10 games that were still close at that time, the Reds outscored their opponents by a remarkable score of 25-2...yes, 25-2. Using the entire pitching staff, along with multiple pinch runners, pinch hitters, and late-inning defensive substitutions, the Reds used their entire roster throughout these tournaments, with all 17 players making significant contributions when the game was on the line. And when each game was on the line, the Reds were tremendous, outplaying their opponents and earning the victories that come with the territory when you play as focused, hard, and well as the Reds did. This was Eaton Baseball at its best. This tremendous performance under pressure had been done before by the Reds' Program, but never before had the Reds had 3 postseason tournaments in two leagues played within two weeks. Given the opportunity, the Reds made the absolute most of it, and completed arguably the greatest **Two Weeks in Pinstripes**.

