

# PINSTRIPE TIMES

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*The Official Newsletter of the Dassel-Cokato Saints*

LEADOFF  
EDITION!

2021



## SEASON PREVIEW

*Do the Saints have what it takes to get over the State Tournament hump?*

### NEW SIGNINGS

*A trio of newcomers join the team. How will they contribute?*

### A LOOK AT THE SCHEDULE

*22 home games in 2021!*

### WEEK 1 MATCHUPS

*A look at who the Saints play in week one of the season.*





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# SEASON PREVIEW

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## 2020 Recap and Retirements

The 2020 season was a rollercoaster ride, with the Saints finding themselves finishing the regular season with a 4-6 record in the North Star League. Settled with the #8 Seed, they were forced to fight through the play-in games, beating both Cokato and Litchfield behind two spectacular pitching performances by Tyler Zweibohmer and Jordan Flick.

After clawing in to the Region 12C tournament, the Saints would fall to top-seeded Buffalo and Howard Lake, ending the 2020 campaign. But after the long, cold winter months of the off-season, the hometown team have their sights set on getting over the hump and making a State Tournament run in 2021.

The Saints come in to 2021 with a slightly new look. Retiring this season are longtime veterans John Hohenstein and Tyler Zweibohmer. Both had incredible

careers; some would say NSL Hall of Fame worthy (time will tell). Filling John's leadoff and outfield spot, as well as the quality innings "Z" provided on the mound will be no small task, but the Saints will have options.

## Off-Season Signings

In perhaps the biggest off-season move in the North Star League, the Saints made a huge splash getting veteran outfielder and big bat, Steve Boger, formally of Howard Lake. Boger, known for his commanding presence in the outfield and his high octane offense, finished 7th in the North Star League last season with a .438 average and scored 14 runs. He'll be expected to bat near the top of the Saints order in 2021, and help fill the void left by Hohenstein's retirement.

Another new signing for 2021 is corner infielder and younger brother of Saints shortstop Tyler Brandel, Ethan Brandel. This 2018 Dassel-Cokato

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High School grad put up huge numbers in his senior season, slashing .357/.451/.500 for an OPS just under 1.000 for the Charger squad. He'll provide a steady glove at 1B/3B and some pop at the plate.



**Steve Boger is the talk of the #NSLHotStove, signing with D-C**

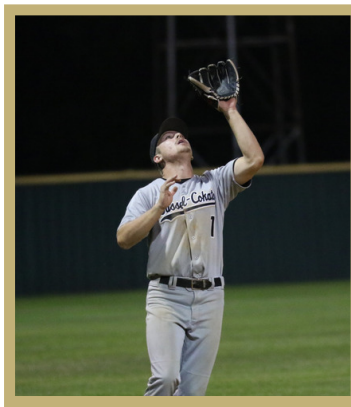
Joining Ethan will be another "rookie", catcher, Josiah Bullivant. Josiah will help bolster the catching core of Dylan Weber and Cy Flick. He can also roam the outfield when called upon.

Between these three newcomers to the team, you can expect each of them to play an important role in the 2021 season.

## Returning Position Players

Some key returning players for the Saints in 2021 is the strong outfield core consisting of Jim Althoff, Gus Flick, Michael Leffler, and Paul Jacobson. Adding a veteran like Boger to that mix will create serious depth in the outfield. How exactly they will line up will depend on matchups, but there is a nice mix of both left and right-handed bats in this group. Expect them all to contribute.

There are several returning players around the horn in the Saints infield as well. Clean-up man and SS Tyler Brandel is back, as well as veteran 1B, Jordan Flick. Also returning is Jacob Niemela, who started the majority of the 2020 season at 3B, and will be a major factor at the corner infield positions. Noah Halonen (SJU) and Nikolai Niemela also return, and will both see plenty of time in the middle infield, whether that be at 2B or SS, or possibly mix in at 3B. Collin Krick is able to play both corner infield positions with a strong arm and ability to scoop errant throws at first base.



**Shortstop Tyler Brandel camps under a pop-up to make the catch**

Ben Lindquist is extremely valuable to the Saints infield, being that he can play all four positions well. Coming back from an arm injury, Ben may possibly see a chunk of time in a DH role to limit his throws. The most senior Saint, Manager Andrew Carlson, will also be able to help fill in at 1B or if needed in the OF. Adding Ethan Brandel to the mix in the corner spots will provide value along with these returning players. Infielder Orrin Grangroth will not be returning for the 2021 season.

Behind the dish, Dylan Weber and Cy Flick return to handle the pitching staff. Weber stepped in immediately and proved to be an asset in the middle of the Saints lineup last season, leading the team with a .295 average. Flick contributed with his defensive prowess and ability to call a quality game. Adding Bullivant to make this duo a trio will afford the Saints plenty of depth at the position.

The Saints will also rely on the versatility of a player that doesn't fit in to just one category. Paul Vetsch, who has been called "Swiss" during spring training due to his likeness of a Swiss Army Knife, is a jacks-of-all-trades, not confined to only play one or two specific positions. A "La Tortuga", if you will. Vetsch will look to build on his rookie season in which he batted .333 in limited plate appearances. Jeff Janckila, who formerly filled this utility type of role, will be hanging up the cleats.

## Returning Pitchers

As stated previously, filling the innings left by Tyler Zweibohmer will be a tall order, but the Saints do have some key returning pitchers this season. Returning to anchor the staff is Jordan Flick, the team leader in 2020 in wins (4), ERA (1.65), and WHIP (0.878). He will need to lead by example with now having a younger core of pitchers on the roster.

Joining Flick are Collin Krick and Michael Leffler, both of whom have experience starting games for the Saints. Krick kept his walk numbers low last

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season (3 BB/9), and pitched to an ERA of 4.29. He'll take advantage of his time pitching this spring at RCTC to build momentum moving forward in to the 2021 season. In 2020, Leffler had solid strikeout numbers (8.62 K/9), but will need to limit walks to maximize his success.

Ben Lindquist's role is uncertain at this time. Coming back from injury, he may be placed in a bullpen role, but if he is 100%, you can expect him at the top of the rotation. When healthy, Lindquist has the ability to take over a game and dominate.



**Pitcher Ben Lindquist uses both his high velocity and movement to retire opposing batters**

James Howell's role is unclear at this time as well, but his versatility makes him a strong candidate in either a starting role or at the back end of the bullpen.

Austin Zweibohmer, Tyler's younger brother, will not be returning this season either, which will leave a combined 54 innings in the COVID-shortened season to fill between the two. Enter a crop of young guns and new-to-the-mound arms to help fill the vacated roles. Of the younger pitchers, Noah Halonen and Jacob Niemela return to expand on their 2020

seasons, in which they combined for 7 relief appearances and 11 total innings pitched. Halonen is spending his spring at St. John's, where he is a two-way guy on both the mound and in the infield. Niemela will be a top end arm as a senior for the D-C High School team this spring. Expect them to have a bigger role on the mound in 2021.

Paul Jacobson will look to log innings for the first time as a Saint as well during the 2021 season. Nikolai Niemela will also see time on the rubber, as well as Cy and Gus Flick, who have been working this off-season to convert in to reliable arms.

Jim Althoff may also see time on the hill; during his tenure with Albertville prior to joining the Saints last season, he racked up a lot of innings and was a pitcher the Villains counted on. The same goes for Dylan Weber, who tallied over 160 innings pitched and a sub-4 ERA during his time with the Hutchinson Huskies prior to joining the Saints last year.

Drew Carlson has a long history of pitching for the Saints (420+ innings), but hasn't toed the rubber since 2017. There are rumors of a possible return for the crafty lefty.

## Keys to Success

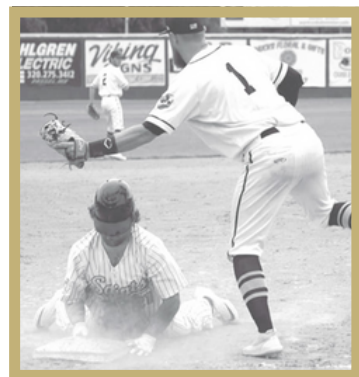
It's been long stated that "pitching and defense wins games", and with the roster shake-up, specifically for the pitching staff, the Saints will need their young arms to step up to the challenge. The

defense improved from 2019 to 2020, jumping from a .922 fielding percentage to a .943 F%. Continuing that trend will be important when it comes to limiting opposing runs.

On the offensive side of things, the Saints look to have a promising lineup. Last season showed some veterans harness their ability at the plate, and also had fresh faces and young guns step up to be everyday contributors. Adding a perennial top of the league hitter in Steve Boger to that lineup can only help.

The major question on offense remains, who will take over the leadoff role left by Hohenstein? A few options come to mind; Paul Jacobson was typically placed in the two-hole, where he reached base at a higher clip than any other Saints in 2020. Jim Althoff is another potential option, given his speed and ability to put together quality at-bats.

In all, the Saints will look to sure some things up, and continue to improve on their successes to make it back to the State Tournament in 2021.



**New to the team in 2021, Paul Jacobson was a key contributor on the offense, posting a team high .421 OBP**

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# A LOOK AT THE SCHEDULE

Slated for the 2021 season is a loaded schedule with 36 total games, 22 of them at home.

As far as the league schedule goes, the Saints play each of the other 10 teams in the league twice during the regular season for a total of 20 games counting towards the North Star League standings.

Last season, the Buffalo Bulldogs ran away with the #1 seed, posting a 10-0 record (only half the league games were played last season due to COVID).

Following up Buffalo in the standings were Delano and Hutchinson, both at 8-2 records.

The middle of the pack was log-jammed, and that's where the Saints found themselves. Seeds 4 though 8 were all within two wins of each other.

Litchfield and Montrose-Waverly finished at 2-8, while Cokato went 1-9 in 2020.

Getting back to a full 20 game league schedule will most likely

mean less parity in the standings. Some teams will pull ahead of the pack, and the Saints hope to be one of those teams.

Along with the 20 league games, there are 16 non-league games slated for 2021. 22 of these total games are at home. There is a great mix of opponents in all three Minnesota Baseball Association classes, and even an out-of-state opponent in the Tempe, AZ Banditos.

Fan-favorite promotions return in Darwin Night, Reading Challenge Night, and Youth Baseball and Softball Night.

Every Sunday is College Day (bring your college ID, get free admission). New to the promo schedule are #DeckTax Night and the Red, White and Brew Showdown.

The full schedule with all promotions are listed at [dcsaints.com/schedule](https://dcsaints.com/schedule). Season passes are available now - contact [info@dcsaints.com](mailto:info@dcsaints.com), DM us on social media, or ask a Saint to get yours today!





**GET YOUR SEASON PASS  
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US ON SOCIAL MEDIA, OR  
EMAIL [INFO@DCSAINTS.COM](mailto:INFO@DCSAINTS.COM)  
TO GET YOURS!**

**\$30 for Adult Pass = \$1.36/Game  
\$15 for Student Pass = \$0.68/Game**

**Full schedule with promotions available at [dcsaints.com/schedule](https://dcsaints.com/schedule)**

## 2021 LEADOFF EDITION

# OPENING WEEK PREVIEW

265 days. 6360 hours. 381,600 minutes. 22,896,000 seconds. However you want to add it up, that's how much time will have passed from the Region 12C playoff loss to Howard Lake last August until Opening Day 2021. Putting it lightly, it left a bad taste in the Saints mouths, and the time has finally come to start fresh, and fight towards the ultimate goal of clawing through the tough North Star League, passed the Region 12C playoffs, and on to a State Tournament run.

The first test will come in the form of the Watertown Red Devils in a non-league matchup, which the Saints will host at 7:00pm on Friday, April 30th, at beautiful Saints Field. An Opening Day starter has not been named at the time of print, but the Saints will have several potential options. Expect anywhere from 3-5 pinstriped pitchers to toss in this game, as it will be a good opportunity for many arms to get some work in.

Last season, Watertown snapped a 12-season State Tournament drought by defeating Green Isle and Mayer in the Region 7C playoffs, earning the #1 seed out of the region and a first round bye in the 2020 State Tournament. They would go on to lose to a tough Isanti team 4-2 in their tournament opener. Lead by ace and leadoff man Pat Tschida, the Red Devils will be a formidable challenge right out of the gate.

A road trip to Elrosa on Sunday afternoon will follow Friday night's matchup. It will be a "Battle of the Saints". Last season, Elrosa finished the regular season with the best record in the Stearns County League, before ultimately falling just short of a State Tournament berth after going 1-2 in the Region 15C playoffs.

So, what will be the keys for the Saints during Opening Week? For starters, new faces and youthful Saints will be counted on to step up and lead right away. Ex-Howard Lake Orphan, Steve Boger, will more than likely patrol the outfield and bat towards the top of the order. Boger is known for putting together great at-bats, forcing opposing pitchers to sweat it out. If he's in the 3-hole, the Saints will need to work hard to get the top two batters in the



*The Lions Club proudly serves drinks at Saints Field all summer long.*

order on base so Steve can do damage. Second year Saint, Paul Jacobson, is one of the top candidates to take over the vacant leadoff spot left by John Hohenstein. If he's placed at the front end of the lineup, his goal will need to be to make pitchers work by drawing out long at-bats, and finding his way on base by any means. Last season, the speedy Jacobson accumulated an OBP of .421, but will need to cut down on strikeouts to optimize his performance.

Pitchers will need to do the following to keep the Saints in these games: Work aggressive, get ahead of the opposing hitters, limit walks, and induce weak contact/strike batters out. Easier said than done, right? But these are the types of things that will keep the Saints in every game. There's high confidence in the leather as the defense was able to improve it's fielding percentage by 21 points from 2019 to 2020. Letting the gloves go to work will be key for the pitching staff.

Be sure to follow the Saints on social media and at [www.dcsaints.com](http://www.dcsaints.com) to see the results of these games, as well as schedule updates, promotions, and much more.

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# 2020 QUICK FACTS AND STATS

## ➔ Weber Shines

In his first season with the Saints, Dylan Weber stepped up to catch the majority of the games.

He also was a star at the plate, leading the team with a .295 average. He also had the highest BABIP on the Saints offense, averaging .409 when putting the ball in play.

He caught fire in the postseason, batting .571 and posting a .625 OBP. The team will count on him to be a major contributor once again in the 2021 season.



## ➔ Althoff Brings Experience

Longtime Albertville Villain, Jim Althoff, decided to join the Saints last season. Living in Dassel, the move made geographical sense, and it paid off for all parties.

The bearded wonder drove in a team leading 11 RBI on the COVID-shortened season, which he can attribute to his ability to put the ball in play and use his speed to his advantage. His decade plus of townball experience has helped him immediately become a team leader both on and off the field for the Saints.



## ➔ Young Guns

With positions up for grabs in 2020, a few of the youngest Saints were able to carve out roles and contribute in a big way. Among them were Jacob Niemela and Paul Jacobson.

At an average age of just 18 between the two, both Niemela and Jacobson were key pieces for the Saints offensively. Their disciplined approach at the plate allowed the two to combine for 32 free bases via walk or HBP. Jacobson led the team with a .421 OBP, and Niemela was right behind him at a .403 OBP. Can they continue their successes in 2021?



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## ➔ Brandel Flashes Pop, Glove

During his 5th season as the Saints shortstop, Tyler Brandel continued to prove his worth at the plate. In a team leading 74 plate appearances, Brandel lead the team in total hits, doubles, home runs, and tied for the team lead in walks. He also had the highest slugging and OPS numbers.

Not only was he a force at the plate, he also posted a .929 fielding percentage in roughly 100 total chances. Entering his 6th season, the Saints will continue to count on Brandel in a clean-up role and in the middle infield.



## ➔ Flick Has Career Best Numbers

In 2021, veteran pitcher Jordan Flick will be entering his 14th season. Father Time hasn't quite caught up with him, however, as last season he posted some career best numbers.

For his career, Flick has logged 769.1 innings, 53 wins, 570 strikeouts, and a 2.80 ERA. These numbers put him in at least the top 8 all time in team history in each of these categories. However, in 2020, he posted career lows in both WHIP (0.878) and ERA (1.65). Can he continue to improve with age?



## ➔ "The Dude" eyes State Tourney

Andrew Carlson enters his 4th season at the helm for the Saints.

The ultimate goal each year for the team is to battle through the Region 12C tournament and earn a spot in the coveted State Tournament. Although multiple pitchers on his staff have been successful enough to enter the State Tournament as draftees, this season "The Dude" plans for the Saints to enter as a whole. This year's State Tournament hosts are Waconia, Chaska, and Hamburg. Do the Saints have what it takes to get over the hump and make the dance?



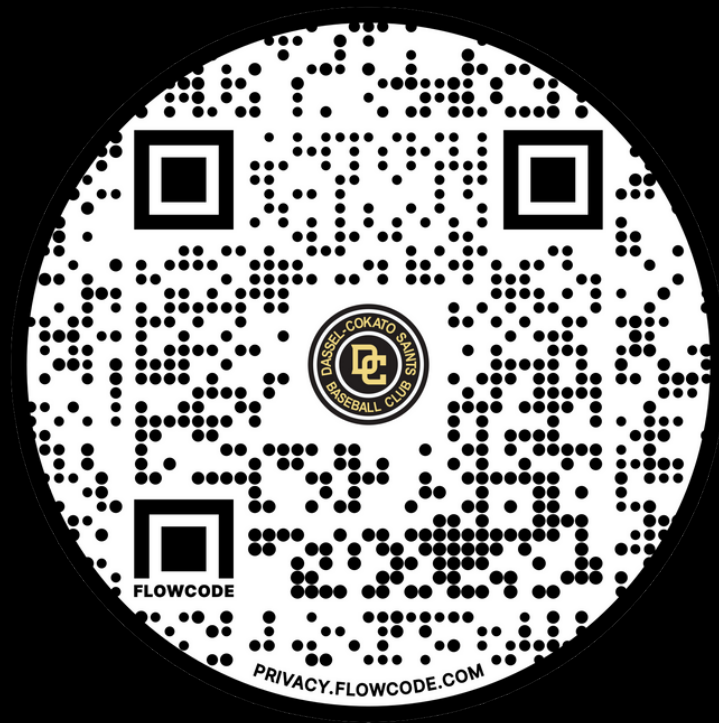
## 2021 LEADOFF EDITION

# SAINTS ROOKIE LEAGUE BACK FOR 2021

Saints Rookie League is back for the 2021 season. Three sessions during the month of May, a Rookie League t-shirt, and a "Game Day Experience" on Wednesday, May 26th prior our game with North Star League rival, Buffalo Bulldogs, all for the low cost of \$20!

For full details and sign-up sheet, head to [dcsaints.com/youth](https://dcsaints.com/youth). If you have any further questions, please contact us at [info@dcsaints.com](mailto:info@dcsaints.com). Checks will be cashed the day before our first session (Friday, May 7th).





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