



# MINNESOTA SOFTBALL HALL OF FAME

## NOMINATION FORM

2024



Nominee Bruce Mensink Birth date 12-4-1954

Address 1222 19th Ave. S.W. City/State Rochester Zip 55902

Softball Community where major accomplishments were achieved Ostrander

Is that softball community's program currently affiliated with the MSF, the MN Softball Hall of Fame Administrator/Custodian? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Home Phone (507) 251-1570 Cell Phone (507) 251-1570

Email Address bwmensink4@gmail.com

Check the Nomination Category:

☐ Superior Performance

☐ Meritorious Service

☐ Pioneers of Yesterday

Check all that apply:

☒ Player

☒ Manager/Coach

☐ Promoter

☐ Administrator

☐ Umpire

☐ Sponsor

Check all that apply:

☒ Fastpitch

☐ Modified Pitch

☐ Slowpitch

Nominated by Brett Legler Date of Nomination 2024  
(If a relative, must have a seconding nomination by non-relative)

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City/State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Seconding Nomination Name \_\_\_\_\_

- CONTINUED ON REVERSE/NEXT PAGE -

Nominee's Personal Stats Averaged 8-10 Strikeouts per game through most of the late 80's & early 90's. Had 17 K's in a district tourney game. Pitched against Eddie Feigner in July 1985. Rarely played in a double elimination tourney & went 2+ out. Always had a competitive team.

Nominee's Personal Accomplishments Played 48 consecutive years of fastpitch, starting in 1961. Won numerous youth league championships as well as adult championships. Had a winning record nearly every year throughout 48 yrs. of playing. Never missed a game due to injury. Won 3 MVP<sup>awards</sup> in Whalan Tourney.

Nominee's Team Accomplishments Won numerous invitational Tourneys. Always had a competitive team in league, state & national play. Won 2 State tournaments.

- ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEET IF NECESSARY -

Attach a one or two page narrative, **as you would want their bio read at the nominee's potential induction ceremony.** Provide pertinent accomplishments of nominee in city, district, state, regional or national competition. **(See reverse side for sample bio).** Also, attach newspaper clippings, letters of reference or other forms of documentation. **Include statistical information in the bio.**

Send to: Minnesota Softball Hall of Fame Committee • 118 12th Ave. N. • South St. Paul, MN 55075  
(651) 451-3140

**DEADLINE FOR SENDING THIS NOMINATION IS JUNE 1**

In 1961 Bruce Mensink started playing organized fastpitch for Ostrander in the southeast Minnesota youth league. A league that continues to this day. With an abundance of pitchers, pitching responsibilities were shared with others in his early years. For the next forty-eight consecutive years Bruce played organized fastpitch for Ostrander until his retirement at the end of the 2009 season.

Ostrander was a very competitive team, winning many youth championships throughout those years. Several volunteers assisted in coaching and mentoring the young players. A special mentor that stands out for Bruce in his early years was his father, Harlan Mensink, who was a very good player on the Ostrander men's team.

Throughout the 60's, 70's, 80's, and most of the 90's, Ostrander fielded two competitive men's softball teams in the state. Bruce started playing in the men's league in 1972 for the Ostrander Elevator team as a talented first baseman - filling that position as a starter in 1973. In 1974, in Duluth, MN, the Ostrander Elevator team won the Minnesota State tournament in the Recreation Class. Following that win, they advanced to the Regional tournament in Grand Forks, ND where they placed second.

In the spring of 1976, there was a tragic accident that took the life of David Swenson, the primary pitcher for the Ostrander Elevator team. His untimely death was devastating to the team. In the following years, Bruce started honing his pitching skills and became the starting pitcher and remained in that position until he retired.

Bruce participated in numerous invitational tournaments throughout southeast Minnesota and northeast Iowa. Some of the tournaments most frequented were; Owatonna, Geneva, Ostrander, Whalan, Lewiston, and St. Charles. The team was made up of a very talented group of men, often winning or placing high in tournaments. Very few runs were given up in those games. More importantly, what made those years so enjoyable was the opportunity to develop friendships for a lifetime. Bruce always enjoyed interacting with players, coaches, umpires, and tournament organizers.

Over thirty-three consecutive years Bruce's team participated in the annual 4th of July Whalan tournament. That tournament is a member of the Minnesota Softball Hall of Fame. His team won five of those tournaments and placed second in five. In 1992 and 1994 Bruce was named the Most Valuable Player of the tournament. In 1993 he was named Most Valuable Manager. It was a family tradition to be in Whalan over the 4th of July watching softball and eating turkey sandwiches.

Bruce played for Hall of Fame manager Darrell Thorson for over thirty years. He also competed against many Hall of Fame members over the years who included: LeRoy Jolstad, Ron Bergstrom, Dick McNaly, Dan Richards, Charles Engler, and Ralph Leistikow just to name a few. There was an entertaining exhibition game when Bruce had an opportunity to pitch against Eddie Feigner in 1985.

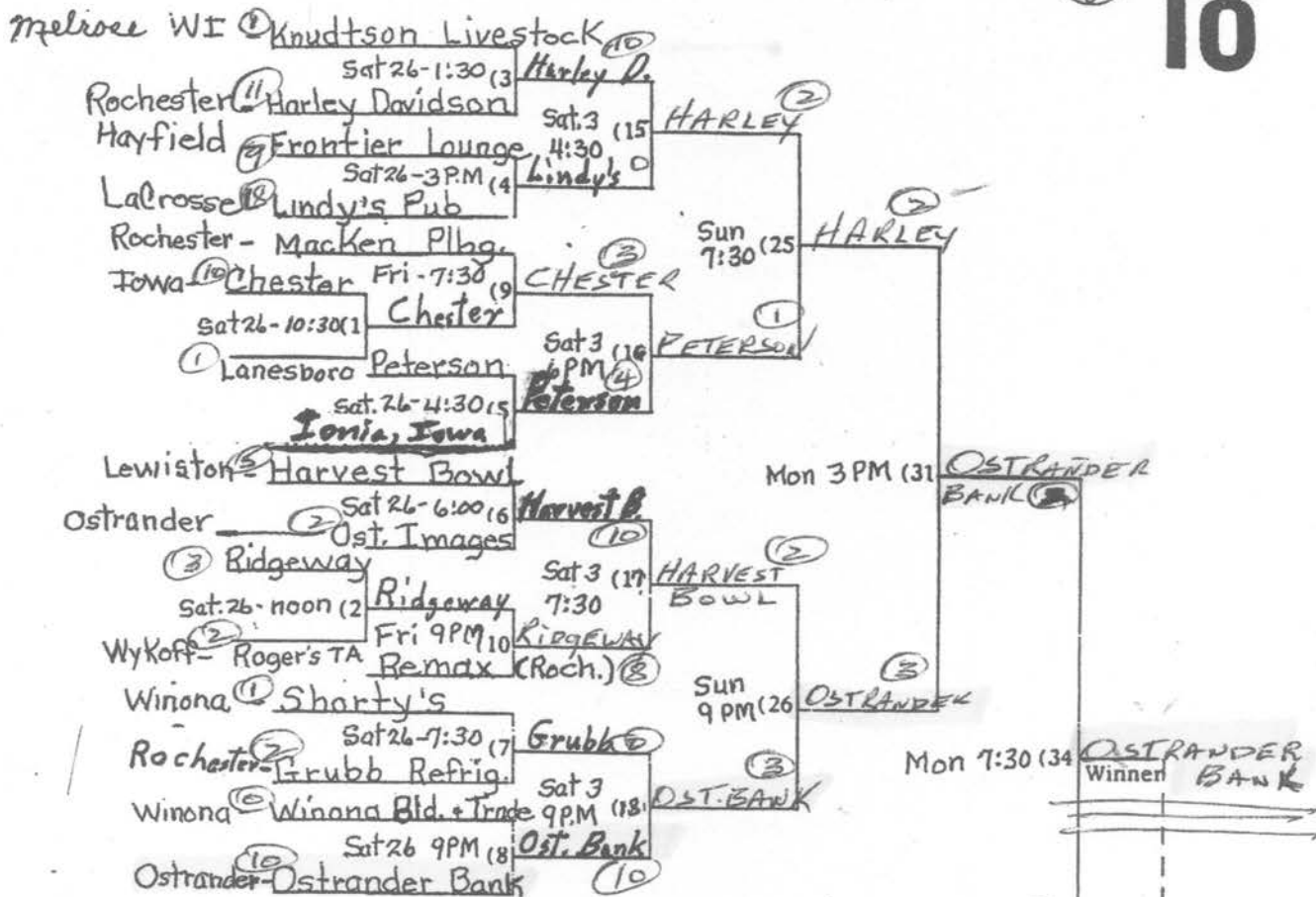
Throughout Bruce's participation in softball he played at every level starting with league, District, State, Regionals, and National tournaments. He also participated in several 40 and Over State Tournaments, as well as the 40 and Over National Tournament held in Minnesota in 1995. Over the years Bruce had a hand in almost every aspect of the game. He was a volunteer umpire for the youth league, assistant coach for his daughter's high school team, coach in the youth league, manager for his son's 23 and Under team, and spent many hours on field maintenance.

His son Ben and daughter Lindsay followed in his footsteps. From the time they were very small, Bruce was teaching them to catch, throw a ball, and eventually how to pitch. They were both pitchers, but also enjoyed playing other positions. Also following in his fastpitch footsteps are his 2 young granddaughters who have also become softball players, one of them being a pitcher for her 10 and Under team who has learned some tips from grandpa. He was an assistant coach for three years for his daughter's high school softball team where she was a starting pitcher for two years. He had the pleasure of being teammates with his son for 10 years. In 2008 they played together on the Ostrander team that won the State Class C championship. Bruce managed his son's 23 and Under team for a few years playing in several tournaments, including taking them to State and National tournaments.

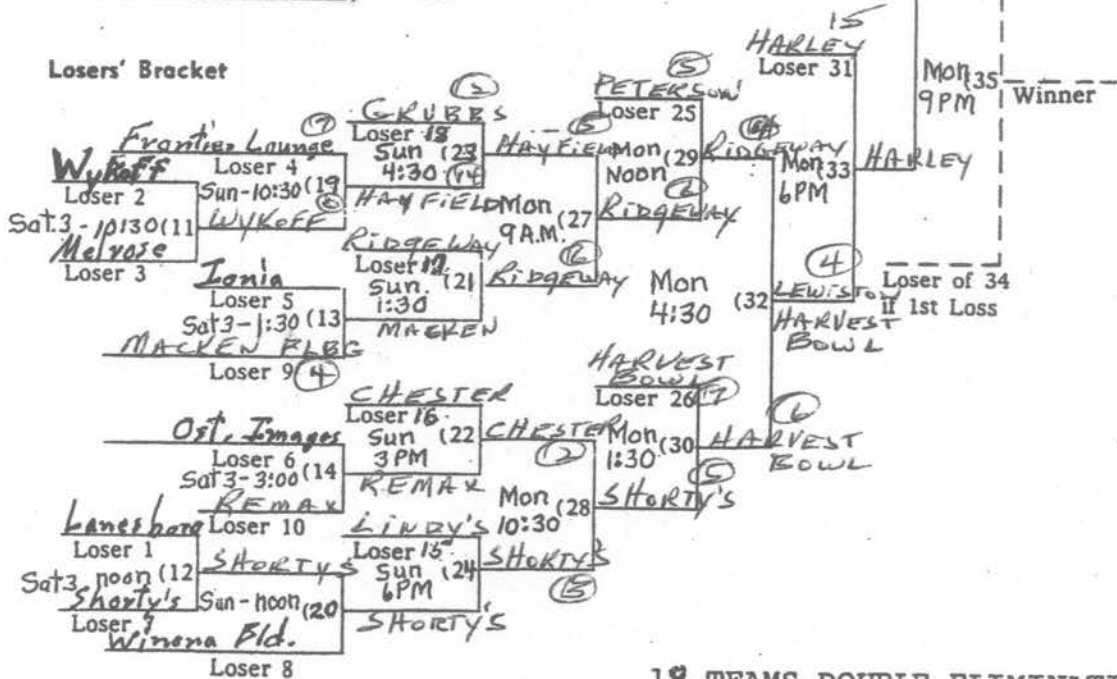
Bruce retired from the game he loved after the 2009 season at the age of 55.

18

### Winners' Bracket



### Loser's Bracket



### 18 TEAMS-DOUBLE ELIMINATION

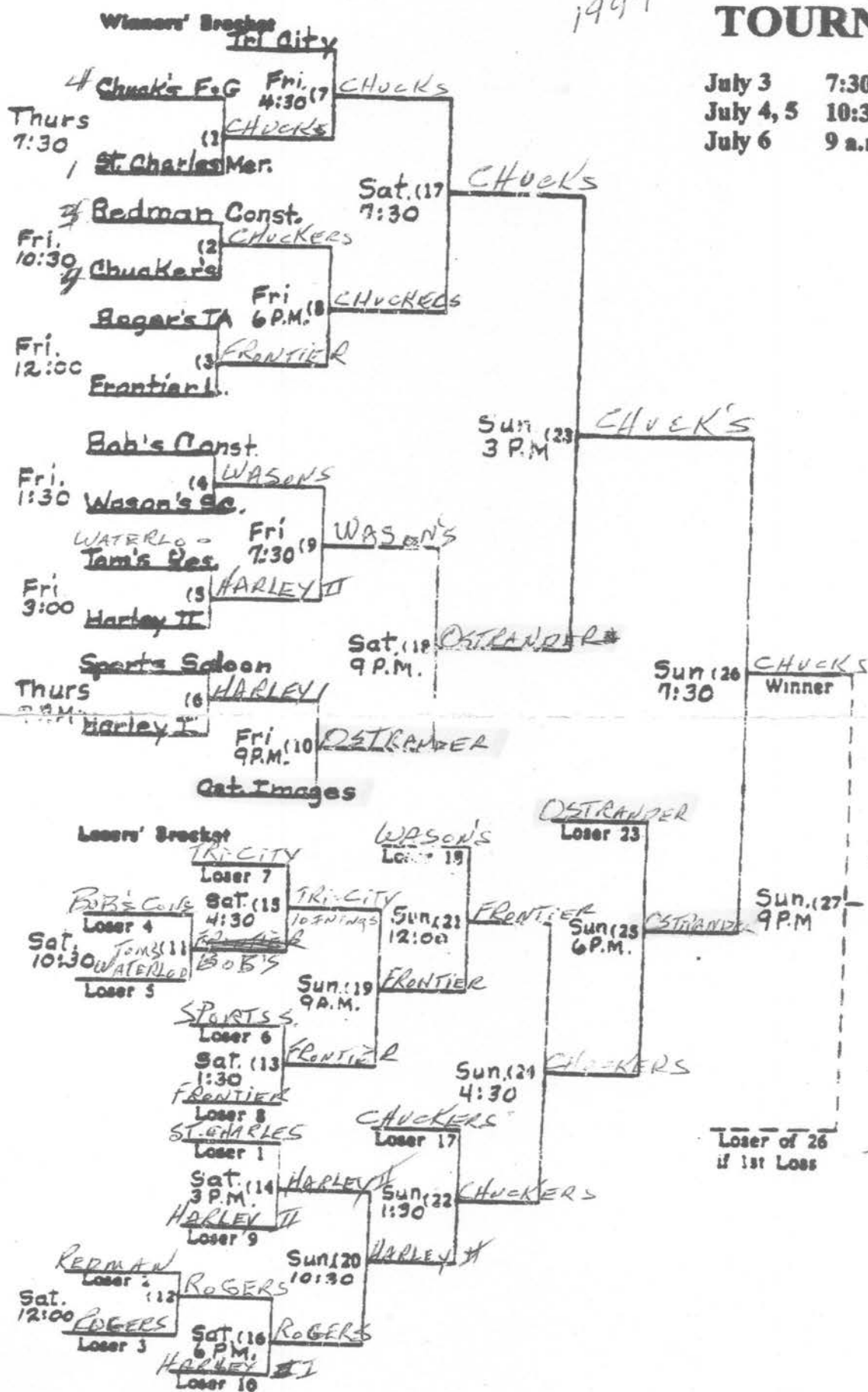
OSTRAWDER SEC. BANK 1st--\$400 TRAVEL EXPENSE + TROPHY  
BRUCE-WAS ALL TOURNEY TEAM 2nd--\$300 TRAVEL EXPENSE + TROPHY.  
+ 3rd--\$200 TRAVEL EXPENSE + TROPHY  
MANAGER 4th--\$125 TRAVEL EXPENSE + TROPHY  
AN MVP & 9 ALL-TOURNEY TROPHIES  
WILL BE PRESENTED.  
MSF--ASA SANCTIONED

# 23rd ANNUAL WHALAN INVITATIONAL FASTPITCH

## TOURNAMENT

1997

July 3 7:30 & 9:00 p.m.,  
July 4, 5 10:30 a.m. - 10:30 p.m.  
July 6 9 a.m. - 10:30 p.m.





# TENTH ANNUAL WHALAN INVITATION

## FAST PITCH SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT

JULY 2, 3, 4, 5, 1982

14 Teams - Double Elimination

### LUNCH STAND ON THE GR

Hot Dogs  
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Campgrounds available

1:30 P.M. Saturday

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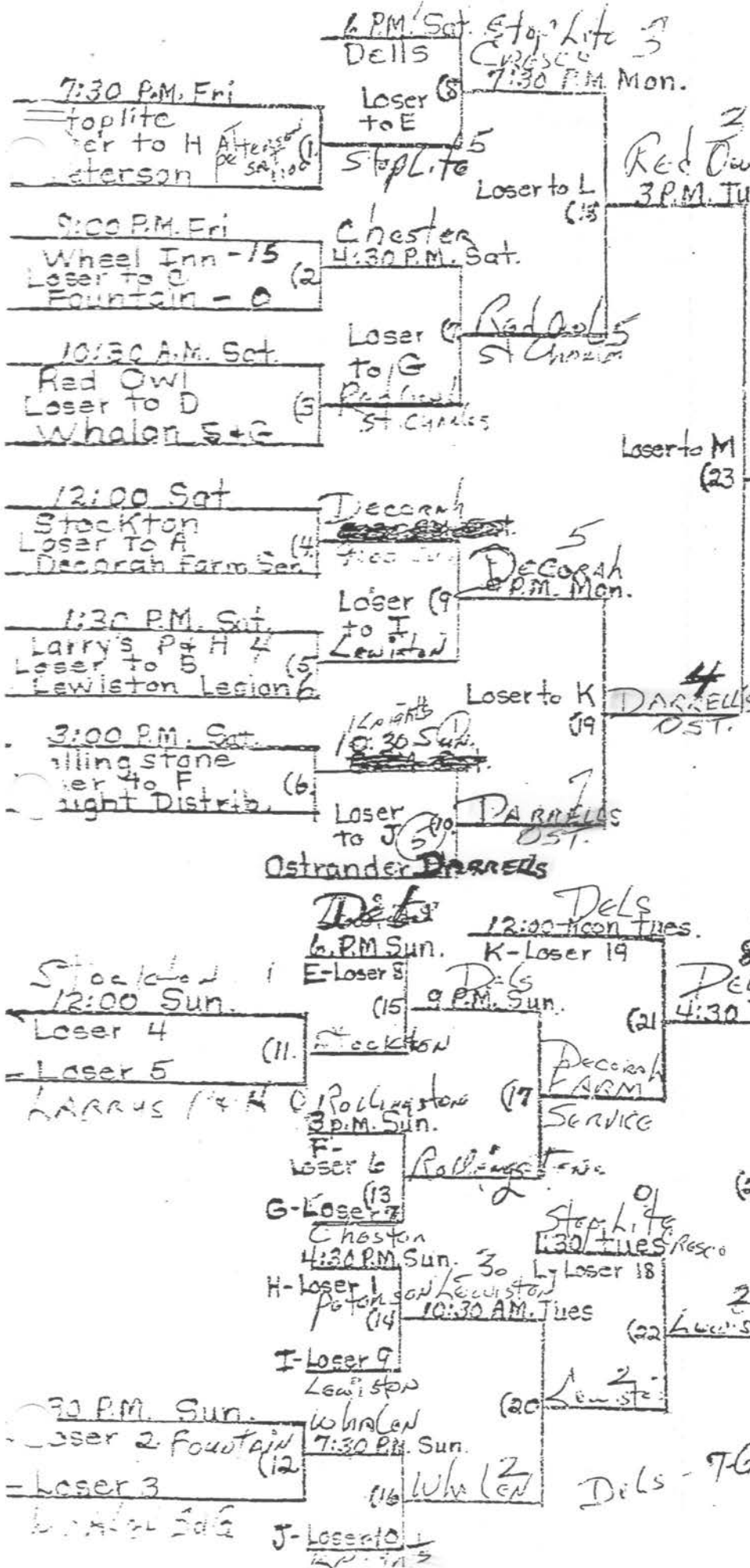
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1st Place  
Bruce was  
Tourney MVP

Ninth Annual Whaian  
Softball Tournament

June 30 - July 1-2  
1978  
14 Teams - Doub  
Elimination



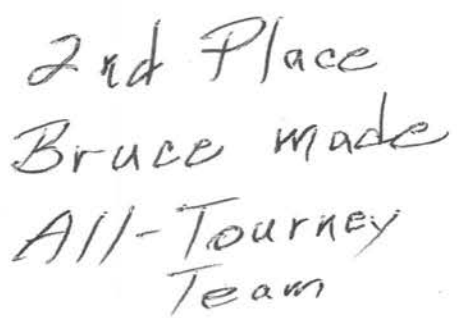
1st Place  
Brac made  
All Tourney/  
Team

Loser of #25 - 3rd



# TOURNAMENT

1997



# Fond memories are made others are rekindled during Whalan Fastpitch Tourney

By Lisa Brainard  
Spring Valley Tribune

Cars lined the street. Crowds cheered. Kids ate food and pitches whizzed by batters at high rates of speed.

Veterans of the fast-pitch softball game talked to friends and scanned the minute details of the game at the same time.

It was the 29<sup>th</sup> year for the annual fast-pitch softball tournament at Whalan. The town of just 60 hosted well over twice that many ball players from locations as varied as Ostrander, Rochester, St. Charles and even Webster City, Iowa, playing on 10 teams.

The almost-hidden ball diamond sits on a hill above the Root River, surrounded by trees and an alfalfa field full of round bales. It's just down the street from the Whalan Lutheran Church, which hosts the tourney.

Loren Berge and Everett Johnson of Whalan have organized the event for the past three years. After chalking a line from home plate to first base, Berge grinned and explained he had been playing fast-pitch softball in league in Whalan since 1969, when he was 15. The tourney itself was started in 1970.

Johnson explained it's been going strong since then, well, other than two or three years off.

## Dahl recalls

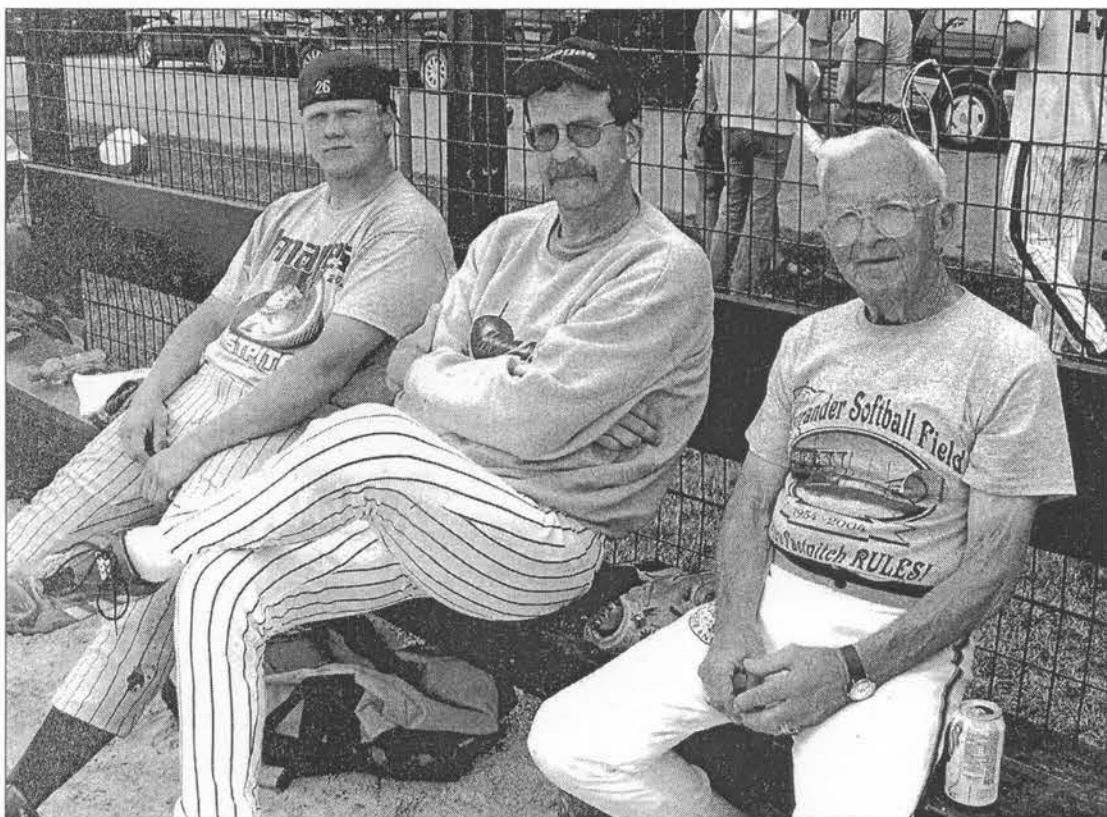
Wandering throughout the ballpark, one finds a group of distinguished-looking gentlemen sitting high atop a semi-trailer. These men looked serious about the game. Wearing a Chatfield player's top, a fast-pitch cap and never letting his eyes waiver from the field, Eddie Dahl of Pilot Mound recalled playing at Whalan over the years.

Dahl said he'd be 71 on July 12, currently battling a year-and-a-half-long bout with lung cancer.

"Don't smoke," he said with a twinkle in his eye and quick grin.

He played fast-pitch softball until he was 68.

When Dahl was 9 years old,



Awaiting their upcoming game at the Whalan tournament on Monday are, from left, Ryan Scheevel of Preston, Bruce Mensink of Rochester (formerly of Ostrander) and Darrell Thorson of LeRoy

(formerly of Ostrander). Thorson, 80, — a member of the Minnesota Softball Hall of Fame since 1989 — coached the Ostrander Images team.

(Tribune photo by Lisa Brainard)

he started playing 4-H softball at Pilot Mound. He laughed, saying a former player from that era had come up to him at the tourney to say hello. It's one reason why he likes the Whalan tournament.

Stressing his love for the game and a disdain for slow pitch, Dahl said, "Slow pitch should be played by old women." That comment had nearby spectators grinning broadly.

While the fast-pitch game seemed to be dying out in the recent past, Dahl said it's making a comeback. There are lots of teams playing fast-pitch in young kids' leagues, he noted.

## Thorson coaches

The Ostrander Images team coached by Darrell Thorson of LeRoy — and formerly of Ostrander — proves the point. At 80 years old, Thorson looks like an anachronism on the bench in his Ostrander softball uniform. It just seems like it should be on a younger man.

However, Thorson has

played fast-pitch softball for around 65 years, starting in 1940. He played in the "church ball league" in Spring Valley, before his senior year in high school. He was inducted into the Minnesota Softball Hall of Fame in 1989.

"I liked the game. There's no better game," said Thorson.

Now he has a "young team" with Ostrander. He said they have 10 guys 24 and under and four guys between 47 and 52.

"You mean there's no one between 25 and 46 (on the team)," laughed longtime player Bruce Mensink of Kasson and formerly of Ostrander.

The Ostrander team included Fillmore Central grads Ryan Scheevel of Preston and Tom Tribon of Harmony, as well as Kingsland graduate Richard Eickhoff.

## Atmosphere

As the shadows grew longer, it was time to check the food and pop stand, both run by volunteers from Whalan Lutheran Church. Everett Johnson said that people return from all over the country each year to help with the tournament. He noted the announcer, Tom Murphy — who grew up near the ballpark — returns from Georgia annually to call the games.

The church uses the admission, food and beverage sales, and souvenir T-shirt and cap sales as a fund raiser. One

\$6,000 from the tourney.

Meanwhile, over at the T-shirt and cap sales, you could also pick up a raffle ticket for a quilt to be given away during the Oct. 16 bazaar at Whalan Lutheran.

"It's a 'Lord's Dollar' quilt," explained Jeannie Halvorson, sitting at the table with three other volunteers.

A number of people said it was a great way to spend three days over the Fourth of July. Perhaps Dahl said it best, "Every year you look forward to Whalan. It's the crowd. There's lots of people. There's good food and you can't beat the prices. Everyone comes by and says hi."

"It's a unique field. And everyone likes the atmosphere," said Berge.

Loren Berge also checked in Tuesday to report the tournament was won by Johnny's Saloon-Moose Lodge of Elba/St. Charles, with second to Hamilton County Merchants of Webster City, Iowa, and third place to Ostrander Images of Ostrander. Pitcher Mitch Grossell from Johnny's was the most valuable player. The all tournament team included Rod House, formerly of Spring Valley and now of Rochester, Ben Mensink of Ostrander and Mark Vikse of Spring Valley, all from Ostrander Images.

Mensink

2004

12 Teams



Taking third place at the Whalen Tournament were the members of Ostrander Images, shown above. They are, left to right, front: Bruce Mensink, Ryan Scheevel, Rod House, Mark Vikse, Coach Darrell Thorson, Matt King and Ben Mensink. Back row include: Larry Christenson, Ben Johnson, Nate McCloud and Tom Tribon. Missing from the photo is Josh Diemer, Kirk Olson and Mike Vikse.

## Ostrander Images take third place at huge Whalen 4th of July Tourney

The Ostrander Images Men's fast-pitch softball team took third place in the 29th annual Whalen Tournament on the 4th of July weekend.

"Our pitching, defense and hitting were outstanding," commented Coach Darrell Thorson of Images' performance. "This is a very tough tournament."

On Saturday, July 3, Images opened up the tourney with an impressive shutout win over Stewartville, 5-0. Ben Mensink took the win on the mound. The team followed with a huge 3-2 win over the Turks from Eau Claire, Wisc., as Bruce Mensink did the pitching for the winners.

On Sunday, July 4, the Images squad were defeated by the defending champions, 10-1, as St. Charles dominated the contest.

On Monday, July 5, the unit came back strong and defeated Hatfield, 4-3, with Ben Mensink pitching, and then defeated Rochester Harley Davidson, 3-1, as Ben Johnson hit a homerun in the bottom of the

sixth. Bruce Mensink pitched the outing to earn the win.

Images closed the tournament in the finals of the consolation round, falling to second place finisher Webster City, Iowa, 5-2. Bruce Mensink took the loss on the mound.

St. Charles again won the title, claiming the championship with a win over Webster City.

Images' players Ben Mensink, Mark Vikse and Rod House were all named to the All-Tournament team.

Other players taking part in the tourney were Nate McCloud, Ryan Scheevel, Matt King, Josh Diemer, Tom Tribon, Ben Johnson, Kirk Olson, Bruce Mensink, and Larry Christensen.

This upcoming Sunday, July 18, the Images, Stewartville and Kasson State Theatre will play a round-robin tournament in Ostrander starting at 1 p.m. Everyone is welcome to attend the event and cheer on their home team!





These three men, from left, Harlan, Bruce and Ben Mensink, have over 67 years of fast pitch softball experience between them. The three have been very active in the fast pitch team in Ostrander, playing in six different decades. Bruce and Ben still play on the Ostrander team,

which will be competing in the 29th annual Whalan Fourth of July Tournament this weekend. Bruce has played in all but the first two Whalan tournaments.

(Republican-Leader photo by Charlie Warner)

## Mensink family keeps fast pitch tradition alive and well, Bruce to play in 27th straight tournament

By Charlie Warner

*For the Republican-Leader*

Although the song "Family Tradition," written and made famous by Hank Williams, Jr., had to do with the fact that the younger Williams had followed in his father's footsteps, it certainly could have been written about a softball-playing family from Ostrander. Harlan Mensink, who is in his 70s, son Bruce, who is flirting with the half-century mark, and grandson Ben, who is 24, have over 67 years of organized fast-pitch softball experience among them and that total grows every year by two, as both Bruce and Ben continue to compete in fast-pitch tournaments throughout the area.

While Harlan, who still works half days at Security State Bank of Ostrander, hung up his spikes and glove several decades ago, Bruce, who will be 50 in December, is still going strong. Bruce figures he's played organized fast pitch for 31 seasons. He spends most of his time on the mound, still using the big windmill windup with his imposing 6'3" frame.

Even at 49 years young, Bruce's arm and shoulder seem to be holding up pretty well. Several weeks ago he pitched 17 innings during a tournament in Cresco, Iowa, and this weekend, Bruce and Ben and the rest of the Ostrander fast pitch team will be competing in the 29th annual Whalan Fourth of July fast pitch tournament.

"The Whalan tournament is one of the best there is," Bruce said. "It's well run; they have huge crowds. It's just an ideal situation the way the field is laid out, for a great tournament atmosphere. I've played in

many tournaments throughout my career, but I've never played in front of the crowds like they have in Whalan." He's played in every Fourth of July tournament in Whalan except for the first two.

"I've been in the championship game (in Whalan) before, looked out at the large crowd, smiled to myself and thought 'look at all these people. This is great,'" Bruce added.

Bruce knows all about big tournament games. In 1974 the Ostrander fast pitch team won the state championship in the recreational league division and went on to place second at the tri-state regional. Ostrander has long been a hotbed for fast pitch softball and at least one Mensink has been a part of it for more than 50 years.

Harlan began playing fast pitch softball for the Cherry Grove team when he was still a teenager living on the home farm in the 1940s. In 1952 he got married and then spent some time with Uncle Sam during the Korean War. When he returned from the service, he took a job at the Ostrander bank and began playing fast pitch in Ostrander, where he played until he was in his mid-40s.

Bruce started playing fast pitch and baseball at an early age and played "ball" through high school. He developed a strong windmill delivery and with his long, lanky build, was able to get the ball from the mound to the plate in the blink of an eye.

For many years, the Ostrander fast pitch team competed in an area league and then went and competed in tournaments on the weekends. As

interest in fast pitch softball declined, it became tougher to get enough teams for a league, and the Ostrander team was forced to travel longer distances to be in a league. For a number of years, they played in a league in Rochester. Four years ago the Ostrander fast pitch team decided not to compete in a league but still travels around to participate in about eight tournaments a year.

Ben was also brought up eating and breathing Ostrander fast pitch softball. He followed the team with his father and learned the underhand windmill delivery from his father and grandfather. "I used to play so much catch with Ben when he was learning to pitch that he wore a glove out in one season," Harlan said with a laugh. When Ben isn't pitching, he plays either shortstop or third base.

Ben got thrust into men's fast pitch softball at an early age, according to his father. "He used to come along to all of our games and sometimes we'd be one player short, so Ben would play. He was only about 14 years old," Bruce recalled.

This weekend, there will be two members of the Mensink family competing for the championship at the Whalan tournament on the Ostrander fast pitch team. This will be Bruce's 27th straight tournament appearance. The tournament runs from Saturday, July 3, through Monday, July 5. There will be 10 teams competing, and there will be another Mensink, a former member of the Ostrander fast pitch team, sitting in the bleachers cheering his "boys" on. It's tradition....family tradition.

# 50th anniversary of the Ostrander Fastpitch ball team held tournament

The 50th Anniversary Fastpitch Tournament of the Ostrander ballfield was held June 5th and 6th. Webster City won the eight team tournament, as they defeated Kasson State Theater six to five.

Kasson defeated Rochester Harley Davidson seven to six, who ended up taking third place.

Bruce Mensink threw out the first pitch of the tournament to Darrell Thorson, tournament organizer. Mensink was born the year the ballfield was started.

50 year anniversary shirts were sold during the tournament. If anyone wishes to purchase one contact Darrell Thorson.

On June 12 and 13, the Ostrander Images played in the Cresco Fastpitch

Tournament. On Saturday they defeated Govea, Iowa 12-5, then they won over the host team, Kasson State Theater, 11-9 in 11 innings, the most exciting game of the tournament.

On Sunday, the Images lost to the New Images from Madison, Wis., 9-0.

Images then defeated Kasson again 5-2, then defeated Madison 3-2 before losing the final game to Madison 3-1.

Luke King, Ben Mensink and Bruce Mensink all pitched great and the whole team played outstanding ball in this tough tournament, taking home 2nd place.

The highlight of the tournament was Veteran Pitcher, Bruce Mensink, defeating a very good Madison, Wis. team 3-2.



Bruce Mensink throwing out the 1st pitch to Darrell Thorson in the 50th Anniversary



Darrell Thorson presenting the first place check to the Webster City



Ostrander Images Team Photo. Front, l-r: Bruce Mensink, Mark Vikse, Darrell Thorson, Nate McCloud, Matt King, Ben Johnson, Luke King, Ben Mensink, Josh Diemer, Rod House, Missing Rod House and Larry Christenson.

Meadow  
Area News

SPORTS