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News

WEDNESDAY, JULY 11, 2012 ■ VOLUME 59 ■ ISSUE 28

715.536.7121 ■ MERRILL, WI

Rangers wrap-up: a nailbiter loss

By Jim Servi

After the hot, humid spell last week, the Merrill Rangers were back on the field Sunday afternoon for a pitcher's duel against Minocqua. Unfortunately, the local boys came up on the short end of a 1-0 game. Shawn Schultz pitched 7 strong innings and allowed the only run, although it was unearned. Alex Grunenwald closed out the game with 1-2-3 out innings in both the 8th and the 9th, but the local couldn't close the gap. Although, the Rangers only managed a couple of hits off the tough Minocqua right hander, they had a runner reach nearly every inning on walks and hustle plays. They threatened to score in the 7th inning with Johnny Annis and Chris Grunenwald on 2nd and 3rd base, but were unable to bring them in. They threatened again in the 9th inning with Kyle Rajek on 2nd base and only one out, after being hit by a pitch and advancing on a sacrifice bunt, but they couldn't capitalize.

Kelly O'Day covered the Ranger's action two weeks ago when they crushed Abbotsford, but the Rangers have been on the ball field ever since their home opener against Rib Lake on May 20th. Unfortunately, the chips didn't fall their way that day as they took the loss 4-1. They bounced back and defeated Wausau at home the following week by a score of 5-2. Then the Rangers hit the road with a big victory over Abbotsford on May 30th. Everyone contributed in the 11-7 win that night. The game in Rib Lake was one that most of the local players want to forget about after dropping a 13-2 game.

They took another big loss at Everest before snapping the losing streak during a tune up game at Whittlesey on June 27 with their most decisive victory of the year, a 9-1 thumping.

That's where the season is at for your Merrill Rangers. They've won some and lost some but all the guys will tell you that they are out there having a great time. Local players on the team this year include Jared Rothmeyer, Brad Kanitz, Luke Golisch, Chase Nelson, Kyle Rajek, Lucas Thiel, Jim Servi, Chris Grunenwald, Alex Grunenwald, Michael Detert, Mike Koppelman, coach Johnny Annis and of course Shawn Schultz.

With the recent passing of "Handsome Hal" Sanders and the induction of Clarence Glenetzke into the Merrill Baseball Hall of Fame, you can't help but reflect on the glory days of Merrill Baseball. The Merrill Rangers were the elite team of the early 1950s with three consecutive state championships from 1951-1953. For any baseball fan or anyone interested in Merrill history, don't miss the opportunity to read *The Rangers Reign* by Mike Weckworth and Louis Paetsch. The book details the championship years, the rivalries, the great players and takes you back in time to visit historic Merrill.

As you can see, Merrill Rangers baseball is back in full swing. They may not hold the clout they once did, but they still put on quite a show. If you get a chance stop by one night or a Sunday afternoon and take a moment to remember the glory days of Merrill Rangers baseball or to re-live your own.

Below is the remaining schedule for the 2012 season: Sat., July 14, @ West-boro, 1:30;

Wed., July 18, Abbotsford (home), 7:30;

Fri., July 20, Everest (home), 7:00;

Sun., July 22, Whittlesey (home), 1:30;

Wed., July 25, @ Wausau, 7:00.