

## Elke leaves legacy behind

Elke will continue as a teacher in Plains, Minn., this fall and will have an opportunity to become principal the following year. He was given a request to help coach the baseball team in Plains.

The coaching and coaching duties in Plains will be shared with Mike Elke, who is a graduate of Sacred Heart High School and a graduate of the University of Northern Iowa. He was a teacher and coach in East Grand Forks for 12 years.

Some of the highlights of his tenure in the community are: He helped the EGF Legion team to two consecutive state appearances in 1998 and 1999. He also coached football and basketball at Sacred Heart, and helped the Moorhead girls softball team out on occasion.

His resignation marks the fourth head coach to resign at Sacred Heart. He joins football coach Jonathan Vonesh and Dave Aker, boys basketball coach Jonathan Vonesh and volleyball coach Christy Peterson as those who have quit.

The resignations are in no way related to any major problems at Sacred Heart. Each resigned for different reasons.

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Elke had plenty of success on the baseball diamond, especially at Sacred Heart, one of the smallest schools in the Minnesota High School League. In his seven-year tenure as either an assistant or a head coach, Elke was part of a program that was ranked as one of the top in Minnesota Class A baseball. Several of his players went on to participate in college baseball programs.

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Elke said he will miss the kids the most. "We did what was right for kids," he said.

Elke's wife, Janelle, operated a successful daycare in East Grand Forks. The two, along with their two children, plan to leave town as early as this weekend.

He leaves behind a respected legacy in both the teaching and coaching community.

"I leave with no regrets," Elke said. Drew Mortenson, an assistant football and baseball coach at the school, is probably the top candidate to be the next head coach.

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Speaking of Sacred Heart, 2007 graduate Alex Kuznia said he is planning on attending NDSU this fall and will participate in basketball.

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The team beat the Moorhead Brewers twice, the Moorhead Miners once and Crookston once in the tournament.

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Don't miss the benefit for the team this Thursday at Stauss Park from 5:15 to 7 p.m. The Home Run Club is grilling hot dogs and burgers with all proceeds going to the team.

### Coach's Corner



Steve Gust

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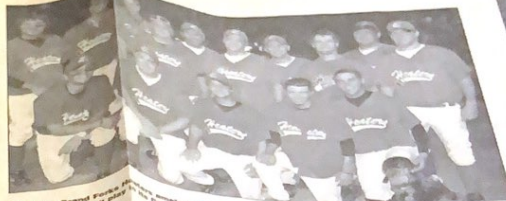
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The East Grand Forks Heaters baseball team won the Region 12C championship last week in Crookston. Photo submitted by Steve Gust.

# Heaters to state

## EGF amateur team wins Region 12 title to earn first-ever Class C state tournament berth

The East Grand Forks amateur team ended the playoffs much like it began the season — proving it is one of the top teams in the area.

The Heaters won the Region 12 tournament last week this qualifying the team to its first-ever state tournament.

The team opens the playoffs this Saturday against Region 7 champion Winsted. The game is in Hamburg. The Class C state tournament is being held in Hamburg and Crookston.

After losing to Crookston in the Norman-Polk County League championship series, EGF rattled off four straight wins to win the region title.

The region title was capped off with a 9-5 victory over the Moorhead Brewers Saturday in Ada.

Andrew Marek led the team in the final. He struck out 11 and allowed just three hits in seven-plus innings. At the plate, Marek went 3-for-5 with three RBIs.

Gary Molek sealed the championship on the mound, getting the final four outs of the game. He added three hits in the game, including his team leading sixth home run of the season.

Perhaps EGF's most satisfying win came in the semifinals against Crookston. The Heaters avenged the earlier playoff losses to Crookston.

EGF used a 7-run eighth inning to rally for the win. Kyle Marston had the big hit,

### Help Support the Heaters

There will be a benefit event for the EGF amateur team on Thursday, Aug. 16, from 5:15 to 7 p.m. The Home Run Club will be having the event, which includes burgers, hot dogs and refreshments. A free will offering will help defray the costs for the Heaters baseball team a trip to the state amateur baseball tournament.

EGF finished the Moorhead Brewers its first loss in four years in the region tournament with a come-from-behind 10-8 win in the first round of the tournament.

The Brewers were 9-0 in Region C games before losing to EGF for the first time last week.

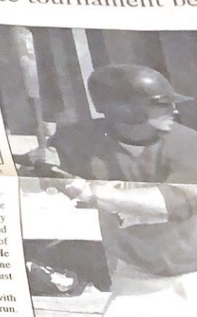
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Matt Marek was spectacular on the mound for EGF. The former Campbell University standout pitched his second complete game shutout of Crookston this season. He allowed three runs, none earned, while allowing just three hits in the game.

Molek led the offense with two hits including a home run. Andrew Marek and Shawn O'Neil each had three hits in the game.

EGF needed a win in the play-in game to reach the region tournament.

EGF did just that early last week with a 7-2 victory over



EGF's Shawn O'Neil gets ready to swing at last week's Region 12 tournament in Crookston. Photo submitted by Steve Gust.



EGF Heaters first baseman Bobby Perez holds a Moorhead runner on in last week's play. Heaters went undefeated to win the Region 12 title in Crookston.

His resignation marks the fourth head coach to resign at Sacred Heart in the last year. He joins football coach Dave Aker, boys basketball coach Jonathon Vonesh and volleyball coach Christy Peterson as those who have quit. The resignations are in no way related to any major problems at Sacred Heart. Each resigned for different reasons.

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The region title off with a 9-5 victory over Moorhead Brewers in Ada.

Andrew Marek was the star of the team in the final out 11 and allowed only one hit in seven-plus innings on the plate, Marek went 2-for-3 with three RBIs.

Gary Molck was the MVP of the championship on getting the final out of the game. He added two runs in the game including a team-leading sixth inning of the season.

Perhaps EGF's biggest win came in the nationals against Crookston. The Heaters avenged their playoff losses to



# Eagles baseball squeezes into state

## Sacred Heart rallies past Win-E-Mac to win first section title

Ben Dziengel

Walk-off home runs are nice, but sometimes a baseball doesn't have to travel more than thirty feet to make for one of the most exciting plays in baseball.

The Sacred Heart baseball team won the Section 8A title last Thursday in Northland Community & Technical College in Thief River Falls with a dramatic seventh inning comeback, beating the Win-E-Mac Patriots 2-1.

The game was tied with a rocket double that nearly left the park, then won with a ball that didn't get a third of the way up the third base line.

With the bases loaded, Coach Mike Elke called for freshman Ross Cariveau to lay down a squeeze bunt with one out to plate the winning run, scoring senior first baseman Michael Phaneuf from third.

"The play was there. Their pitcher was in a full wind-up," Elke said. "Sometimes we have to manufacture runs."

Down 1-0 going into the bottom of the seventh, Sacred Heart sent its third, fourth, and fifth batters to the plate to mount the comeback. Senior starting pitcher Andrew Marek drew a five-pitch walk from Win-E-Mac starting pitcher Aaron Cook to start the inning. Senior catcher Mike Amundson followed by hitting a hard ground ball to short that was booted for an error, leaving Marek at second and Amundson at first with no one out.

Up stepped Phaneuf with the tying run in scoring position. Phaneuf drove a pitch to the left field fence for a double, scoring Marek and tying the game.

Sophomore left fielder Andrew Curley followed with and infield single, loading the bases. After junior shortstop

Ben Pribula hit a dribbler back to the pitcher who forced out Amundson at the plate, Cariveau came through with his heroics, laying down a perfect bunt that died about twenty-five feet up the third base line.

"We bunt every day, and Ross has been one of our better bunters all year," said Elke. "We had all the confidence in him."

Marek pitched all seven innings for the win for Sacred Heart, allowing six hits and one walk, while striking out nine. After giving up three hits and one run in the first inning, Marek found his pitching groove and kept the Win-E-Mac hitters off-balance with his mix of fastballs, forkballs, curves, and change-ups.

"Andrew has been generally a slow starter," Elke said. "But after the first inning, he came in and said they're not going to score again."

The Eagles defense also provided Marek with some help with some excellent fielding plays. A double play in the first got Marek out of an early jam. Cariveau made a nice running catch in right-center for the first out of the sixth, and an unusual double play ended that inning. Marek himself showed great range by getting off the mound quickly and catching a short pop-up along the third base line in the seventh.

"Our defense has always been a strong point," Elke said. "We put Ryley McMahon at second base from left field and moved Andrew Curley from second to left and we took off from there."

It was a good thing that Marek was pitching great Thursday afternoon, because his counter-part Cook was equally effective.

Cook pitched into numerous jams through the first six



After losing in the section title game the past four years, the Sacred Heart seniors celebrated with the section championship trophy after beating Win-E-Mac 2-1 Thursday afternoon.

Photo by Ben Dziengel

innings, but pitched his way out of trouble each time.

Sacred Heart loaded the bases in the second and fourth innings, but Cook pitched out of the innings with no harm done both times. Through six innings, the Eagles stranded a total of 11 runners, including nine in scoring position. Eagles hitters went 0 for 12 with runners in scoring position until the seventh.

Heading into the bottom half of the seventh, Elke had a few words of encouragement for his players.

"I told the boys we've come too far to turn back," Elke said. "We've come back in the past, and we'll do it again."

"We had a chance to do something for the first time in school history (send a boys team sport to a state tournament), and the boys really responded."

Cook allowed 10 hits, walked five, hit one batter, and struck out two in the loss.

With the win Sacred Heart improved to 20-3, while Win-E-Mac fell to 16-7.

Sacred Heart advances to the

State Class A Tournament for the first time ever. They lost the championship game of the section each of the past four seasons.

The Eagles play New Ulm Cathedral at 10 a.m. Thursday in Chaska.

**Sacred Heart 4**  
**Laporte 2**

Sacred Heart reached the title game with a 4-2 win over Laporte last Tuesday afternoon.

The Eagles broke a 2-2 tie with two runs in the bottom of the sixth inning. The inning was highlighted by a sacrifice fly

from Amundson and a run-scoring double by Phaneuf.

Sacred Heart opened the first inning with two runs, taking advantage of two Laporte errors and a hit by Marek.

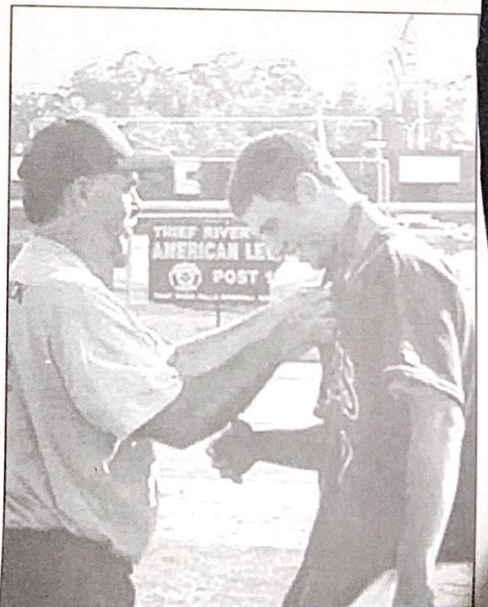
For the game, Marek was 4-for-4. He also pitched to three batters in the seventh to earn the pitching save.

Josh Kaiser worked the first six innings and scattered five hits to improve to 7-1 on the season.



Sacred Heart's Mike Phaneuf (right) reacts after scoring the winning run from a Ross Cariveau suicide squeeze in the bottom of the seventh inning in the Section 8A title last Thursday.

Photo by Ben Dziengel





## HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL

# Sacred Heart takes a new approach

- After four straight Section 8A runner-up finishes, the Eagles take this season one game at a time

**By Wayne Nelson**  
Herald Staff Writer

Mike Elke is a history teacher at East Grand Forks Sacred Heart.

He's also the school's new baseball coach.

He's telling his players to forget history and concentrate on the future.

"Everything is new," Elke said. "We've forgotten about the past. It's a new beginning. As a history teacher, I can tell our players to forget about it."

There is good reason for Sacred Heart to forget the past.

The Eagles have advanced to the Section 8A championship game the past four years. But the Eagles, who opened their season Friday with a win, aren't looking at the past four losses in the sectional championship game.

It's only one game at a time for the Eagles this season, Elke said.

Elke became the Eagles' new coach when Steve Gust resigned to take the head baseball job at Northland Community and Technical College.

The Eagles enjoyed a lot of success under Gust.

Under Elke, that success is expected to continue since the Eagles return a number of players from last season's 16-8 team.

"We have a new coaching staff, a new outlook and new expectations," Elke said. "We've made some ideology changes."

Also, Elke said last year's run to the Section 8A title game against Fertile-Beltrami wasn't expected.

"Last year, we may have overachieved a bit," Elke said. "We were pretty young."

The youth perhaps caught up to Sacred Heart as the season hit crunch time.

"Down the stretch, we couldn't get the big hits when we needed them," Elke said.

"With some experience and seasoning, I think we'll be back in the hunt this season."

The Eagles will rely on senior pitchers Andrew Marek, Josh Kaiser and Mike Amundson. The three combined for 14 of Sacred Heart's 16 wins last year, with Marek going 6-2 on the mound.

And Marek also had a standout season at the plate, batting .452.

Elke is in his first season of coaching high school baseball.

He played at Northland and at Bemidji State before becoming a coach on the Beavers' staff. This is his fifth year at Sacred Heart. Elke also assists Gust with the EGF Legion team in the summer.

"Coaching high school baseball is something I've always wanted to do for a long time," Elke said. "It's a different type of game."

### EGF SACRED HEART AT A GLANCE

Last season: 16-8.

Coach: Mike Elke.

Returning regulars: Sr. P-OF Andrew Marek, 6-2 (won-lost), .452; sr. 3B-P Josh Kaiser, 5-2, .286; sr. C-P Mike Amundson, 3-3, .365; sr. 1B Mike Phaneuf, .369; Jr. OF-P Brad Gulbranson, 2-0; jr. SS Ben Pribula, .250; jr. OF-C Ryley McMahon, .227.

Top newcomers: Fr. OF Ross Cariveau; soph. 2B Andrew Curley.

Mike Elke says: "We have a good corps of players. There is talent. But there is a lot of parity this year in the conference, which will make things interesting. As long as everyone stays healthy, it should be a good year for us."

And the Eagles are now hoping for a different end to their season.

But Elke said the journey will come one step at a time.

"We're not even thinking about the section finals," the Eagles' coach said. "We still have a lot to accomplish, but it's a long season."

Nelson reports on sports. Reach him at 780-1268, (800) 477-6572 ext. 268 or [wnelson@gfherald.com](mailto:wnelson@gfherald.com).



# Elke leaves legacy behind

Mike Elke is leaving East Grand Forks for Texas. The teacher-coach at Sacred Heart High School handed his resignation in to the school last week.

Elke was a 7-year social studies and baseball coach at Sacred Heart. He was also a successful assistant coach for the American Legion team.

Elke will continue to be a teacher in Plano, Tex. this fall and will have an opportunity to become a principal the following year. He was given a stipend to help coach the baseball team in Plano.

His teaching and coaching salary in Texas will be more than twice that of Sacred Heart.

A graduate of Cavalier High School and Bemidji State, Elke was a popular teacher and coach in East Grand Forks.

So why would Elke want to move out of the area? "It's a career move," Elke said. "There just aren't a lot of opportunities here. I've been told several times that I am overqualified for jobs here."

Some of the highlights of his tenure in the community:

- Elke helped the EGF Legion team to two consecutive state tournament appearances and more than 100 wins in his two seasons.
- As the head coach at Sacred Heart High School, Elke helped the Eagles to two consecutive state tourney appearances, with the team capturing fifth place two seasons ago.
- Elke also coached football and basketball at Sacred Heart, and helped the Green Wave girls softball team out on occasion.

His resignation marks the fourth head coach to resign at Sacred Heart in the last year. He joins football coach Dave Aker, boys basketball coach Jonathon Vonesh and volleyball coach Christy Peterson as those who have quit.

The resignations are in no way related to any major problems at Sacred Heart. Each resigned for different reasons.

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## Coach's Corner



Steve Gust



Mike Elke



JASON  
FELDMAN

# Elke defies diagnosis

Twice in Mike Elke's life, doctors thought he was dead.

For most of the past 25 years, the pain he experienced on an almost daily basis as the result of his battle with Crohn's disease was all but unbearable. On a good day, the relief he felt was something akin to what you would feel when you stop after beating your thumb with a hammer for 10 minutes.

So it's easy for Elke to smile when he steps into the first base coach's box for the East Grand Forks (Minn.) American Legion baseball team in the summertime.

"It's been a blessing for me just to be around kids and baseball," said Elke, whose team competed at the Minot Invitational tournament over the weekend. "The best treatment I can have is to be around baseball. I feel like I missed out on my childhood and now I'm getting some of that back."

Elke said he is enjoying baseball now more than ever because of a new treatment for Crohn's disease called Remicade.

Crohn's disease causes inflammation of the small intestine and can affect any part of the digestive track, from the mouth to the anus. The inflammation extends deep into the lining of the affected organ, resulting in severe, constant pain and often diarrhea.

## □ Elke

Continued from Page D1

stomach's lining or large intestine can lead to the onset of Crohn's.

"It's a stress disease, stress brings it on," Elke said.

Remicade is not a cure, but Elke said he receives treatments approximately once every four months which allow him to be pain free for months at a time.

"It's like a chemotherapy treatment, but it's given by an IV infusion," he said. "The worst thing about (Crohn's) before this was all of the surgeries and medical procedures and pain to deal with."

Elke, who now teaches 7-12th grade social studies at Sacred Heart School in East Grand Forks, has had Crohn's disease since 1977, when he was just 5 years old. He was in and out of the hospital in his home

town of Cavalier, N.D., "too many times to count" as a young boy. Doctors initially thought he had leukemia or cancer and, as a 5-year-old, gave Elke 5-to-10 years to live.

Elke openly talks about his struggles not because he feels sorry for himself, nor because he wants others to feel sorry for him. He wants to make people aware of the disease and to let others affected by Crohn's know that they aren't alone.

"I had to stay active, and anyone who has (Crohn's) should stay active, but you have to know your limits," he said. "I always say 'you have to turn setbacks into comebacks.' I didn't let it stand in my way."

According to Remicade's web site ([www.remicade-crohns.com](http://www.remicade-crohns.com)), the treatment may not work for all Crohn's patients. In Elke's case, however, as soon as he started treatment at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., he went from a 115-pounder

who had trouble eating to a healthy 180 pounds.

"I'll have to deal with Crohn's the rest of my life, with treatments every four months," he said, "but I don't have the constant pain anymore. You can't let the disease dominate you, because it will."

Elke also is an assistant coach for the Sacred Heart football, boys basketball and baseball teams. The Eagles' baseball team came up one game shy of the state tournament in May, falling

in its sectional championship game. Elke was disappointed, but he knows there are a lot worse places to be than on a baseball field.

To the people who know him, Elke said it would come as no surprise that he can best relate his situation to baseball.

"When life throws you a curveball," he said, "you have to be patient, sit back and rip it."

(Jason Feldman is a Daily News sports writer. He can be reached at [mdnsports@ndweb.com](mailto:mdnsports@ndweb.com).)



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# Elke Inducted Into Hall Of Fame...again

Everyone at Sacred Heart High School, in East Grand Forks, MN, just calls him "Coach." Now they are also calling him a two-time Hall of Fame inductee.

Coach Mike Elke was inducted into the Sacred Heart Hall of Fame for an incredibly rare second time as a coach on August 21, 2015. He was first inducted in 2012 and then again this year.

He was given this honor in 2012 as part of the coaching staff of the first girls' fastpitch softball team in school history to advance to the state tournament in 2000. This time, he and his coaching staff and the boys' baseball teams he coached in back-to-back Section 8A championships in 2005 and 2006. The 2005 team was also the first in school history to advance to a state tourney.

For Coach Elke, much of his career has been marked by firsts. As a college baseball player at Northland Community College, Elke was going to miss the last half of his sophomore baseball season due to a torn rotator cuff and wasn't sure what would happen next. Luckily, he was hired by the head women's fastpitch softball coach to be the assistant head coach and, more importantly, the hitting coach.

He had never coached girls before. As he pulled on his old, familiar number 11, he remembers muttering the words, "There's a first time for everything."

His women's team at Northland had a good pitcher, a stout defense, and were very formidable at the plate, hitting over .300 for the season. This team would be the first women's fastpitch team in school history to advance to a state junior college tournament. They got their first win at a state tournament as well.

Elke graduated and moved on to Bemidji State University. With his shoulder wounds healed, he tired out for and became a walk-on to the baseball team. He earned a spot, not only as a player, but also as the hitting coach. This Beaver team became the first team in well over a decade to eclipse a .500 record with Elke again getting the bats going.

After graduating with a degree in Social Studies Education, Elke took his first teaching position at Sacred Heart High School. He also was assistant head and hitting instructor for the girls' fastpitch softball team.

Again, Elke muttered "there's a first time for everything." The girls, however, had the hearts of champions and a never say die attitude. "Their tenacity and attention to detail were huge advantages," Elke recalls.

In the Section 8A championship game, Elke exploited a weakness on the opposing team and the girls bunted, not hit, their way to their first title. This would become a trademark for Elke in years to come.

For this, the Sacred Heart Hall of Fame committee would come calling in June of 2012. The coaches and the team were inducted and enshrined.

After the historic 2000 softball season, Elke transitioned to baseball as the assistant head coach, outfield coach and, of course, the hitting coach. The Eagles hit above .300 in each season under his watch.

Elke was promoted to head coach of the Eagles in 2005, a team known for losing the "big game." Expectations for the Eagles were very high in his first season as the boys returned many key starters from the previous years Section runners-up. Elke said "Their job was to win and my job was to make sure I didn't screw it up."

The Eagles went 20-3 in Elke's inaugural year, beating a highly touted Grand Forks Central, a North Dakota class A powerhouse that would be considered a AAA team by Minnesota standards. The team won the Sub-Section and conference crowns and were set to enter the elusive Section tournament for a fifth consecutive year.

The Eagles, again hitting over .300 as a team, won the first game of the tournament and were due for a rematch for the title with arch-rival Win-W-Mac, who had beaten the Eagles in the same game a year prior.

The game came down to the bottom of the 7th with Sacred Heart trailing 1 to 0. The power hitting Eagles had many chances throughout the game stranding 11 runners including nine in scoring positions.

The Eagles quickly loaded the bases in the last half of the 7th and managed to plate the tying run before Elke and his team showed steel in their veins. Elke, with the winning run on third and the number 8 batter up, called for a 'suicide squeeze' that was performed to perfection, scoring the winning run, a first ever state tournament, and a place in Sacred Heart history.

The Eagles eventually lost in the state tournament to the eventual state champions, New Ulm Cathedral.

The Eagles were at the top of the state class A pre-season poll in 2006 but had to replace six of the nine starters from the previous year.

"At our first coaches meeting of the season, I told my staff that we would find out how good we were, as coaches, to get back to where we were," Elke reminisced. "As it turned out, the kids were equal to the task. We had to depend on our young guys from last year's team. There were bumps in the road but the



Coach Mike Elke  
(Cavalier High School graduate)

boys did everything we asked them to do."

They did indeed, getting back to the Section championship, winning in a 9-1 rout over favored Badger-Greenbush-Middle River and advancing to their second consecutive state tournament.

"This team was built for the playoffs," Elke recalled. "They played their best baseball of the season at the end of the year. They couldn't wait to get to the playoffs to prove that they were the team to beat. They played with a chip on their shoulder and the closer we got to the playoffs the better they played."

As it turned out, the Eagles were again disappointed in the first round, again in a nail biter, but advanced this time to the state consolation championship. This matched them up against the state's top ranked regular season team in Upsala-Swanville Area, who had only lost one game all season.

The Eagles were down 5-1 after four innings but rallied to win 8-7 to bring back the trophy and become the team to eclipse the best finish in school history. Ironically, the pre-season number one beat the regular season number one.

The Sacred Heart Hall of Fame committee inducted both of Elke's teams into the school's Hall of Fame. As mentioned, this was Elke's second time, but which was more memorable?

"They are both memorable because all three teams were unique," said Elke. "What is most memorable, however, is how special each of these three teams were, each and every player were like my own kids and they all deserved to be remembered for what they accomplished, the odds they overcame and the people they turned out to be. They are all champions in many different ways. I'm just very happy for them and I'm honored to be a part of their success."

After the 2006 season, Coach Elke was given an opportunity to coach in the "Elite Baseball" organization as a clinician/hitting coach. It is owned and operated by Darin Evenson, the AA manager for the Colorado Rockies in New Britain.

Elke and his family moved to Plano, TX in 2007 where he took the job of principal at Jasper High School. He was also hired as part of the baseball staff in West Plano. The Wolves won the state AAAA championship with a 52-2 record and ended the season as the nation's top ranked high school team.

Elke coached one more year before pursuing his doctorate full time in educational administration. The family moved back to Minnesota in 2010 to Bemidji to follow his wife Janelle's career path in Special Ed.

That took them to Anoka in 2012 where Mike took the position of superintendent of district #435 in St. Paul, and she, again in Special Education in the Anoka-Hennepin district.

Mike took up coaching again in the Coon Rapids/Andover Little League and took the board of director's position of coaching coordinator for a brief stint. "I did this to have the opportunity to coach Leo and Lyndon," Mike said. "CRAALL is one of the best operated organizations I've had the chance to be part of, the kids love it and both are doing great."

Leo is now a 7th grader at Fred Moore Middle School and Lyndon is entering 4th grade at Lincoln Elementary. Both love school and are aspiring baseball players and maybe someday coaches.

Coach Mike Elke and his family continue to reside in Anoka, MN. Mike is a graduate of Cavalier High School. He has degrees in education from Bemidji State University, the University of St. Thomas and Bethel University. He also earned semester credits on his undergraduate degree from Oxford while studying abroad in England. His parents are Raymond (deceased) and Gerry Elke, both of Cavalier.