



Sun Division Tourney Champs: Standing, l-r: Mgr. Gary Hillabolt, Steve Hilby, Tom Schneider, Bill Corso and Sam Giordano. Kneeling, l-r: Gregg Peterson, Dennis Bernaiche, Mike Willits, Tim Loeffler and Dennis Kennedy. (Photo by Core Photography)

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Farmers Insurance Are Sun Division Upset Kings By Larry Wolfe

Who'd have thunk it!? The Farmers Insurance team, managed by Gary Hillabolt, surprised everyone with their upset win in the Sun Division Softball Tournament. The Farmers finished the regular Spring League season in last place with an underwhelming record of 4-14, but come tournament time, they played like champions. Here's a recap of the double elimination season-ending tourney:

In the opening game the Farmers faced the number one seed, Brenden Financial Planning, managed by Ken Brenden. The Planners had coasted to the regular season crown with a record of 15-3, a full nine games better than

the Farmers. In an exciting extra inning contest, the Farmers eked out an 11-10 win sending the Planners to the losers' bracket. Dennis Bernaiche and Tim Loeffler led the winners with four and three hits, respectively. Mark McKinnon led Brenden's team with three safeties.

The Real Estate Rustlers, managed by Jim Leckner, easily dispatched the Young Realty team, managed by Mike Gloyd, in game number two. Tom Kasunic, Dave Martin and Randy Neumann led the Rustlers to a 19-10 victory. Kasunic and Neumann each slugged two homers while Martin went a perfect 4 for 4 with 4 runs scored. Tom Cheney and Dave Armstrong led the Realtors with three hits each.

On the second day of the tournament the upstart Farmers edged the Rustlers 14-11 with Tim Loeffler again leading the way by going 5 for 5. Mike Otman and Roger Wisslead paced the Rustlers with three hits apiece. In the second contest, the Young Realtors surprised and eliminated the top-seeded Brenden Financial Planners with a convincing 21-11 win. The Realtors banged out 28 hits with Dick Bleich going 5 for 5. He was supported by Chuck Schaan, Dave Armstrong and Gary Hatch who each had four hits. Dave Martin went 4 for 4 in the losing cause.

In the semi-final contest, the Young Realtors beat the Rustlers 19-11. Everyone in the Realtors line-up garnered at least two hits (25 in all) with Reyes Gonzales and Dave Armstrong bashing long homeruns. Dan Bradfield went 4 for 4 for the Rustlers.

In the championship game, the "Miracle Workers," otherwise known as the Farmers Insurance team, coasted to an 18-6 drubbing of the Young Realtors. Sam Giordano paved the way, going a perfect 5 for 5. The Realtors were limited to ten hits compared to 25 for the champions. When asked how a 4-14 team can go undefeated during a tough tournament, Manager Hillabolt said, "It must be managerial genius!" Congratulations, Farmers Insurance!