B SECTION DAILY AMERICAN REPUBLIC

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Sports Today

That's A Winner

Jr. American Legion Brings Home Midwest National Title

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Ron Smith Sports Editor
Daily American Republic

BRIDGEPORT, MICH. — Who said it's better to hit than be hit?

Poplar Bluff's Junior American Legion baseball team certainly didn't mind taking a hit or two to the body en route to claiming the Mid-West National Legion championship.

Coach Pat Carda's team won the title by edging Hattiesburg, Miss., 4-3, in eight innings in the second championship game Tuesday. Hattiesburg had won the first championship game, 5-4, earlier in the day.

Justin Shell scored the title-clinching run after Marcus Pattillo was hit by a pitch with two outs in the eighth.

"It hit me on the shirt," Pattillo said. "I didn't even feel it."

"I wasn't going to swing at the pitch because Coach had told me to take a strike. But, I didn't think the pitcher would be that wild."

Just prior to plunking Pattillo, Hattiesburg's pitcher hit Justin Tune on the forearm on an 0-2 count.

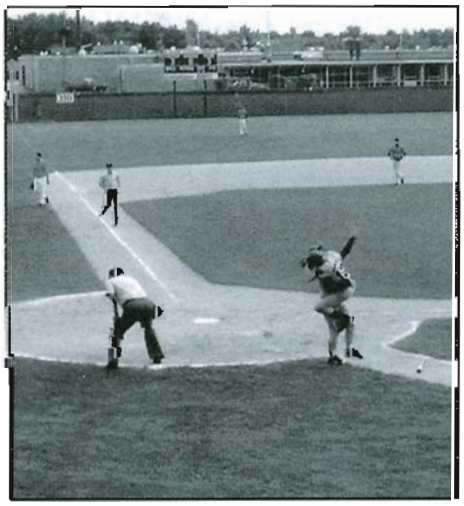
"Our guys are good about staying in the batter's box on a curve ball," Carda said. "We saw an opportunity and took it."

"I'm excited for the players and their parents. It really hasn't hit me, yet. It probably will in a week or two. This will do nothing but help the program down the road. Hopefully, it will get even more kids interested in baseball."

Poplar Bluff proved it could play the game with anyone. By winning the second championship game, Carda's players allowed themselves to hold onto the distinction as having no team claim two wins against them.

"We knew nobody had beaten us twice all year," said shortstop Matt Stahl, who ripped a three-run homer in the first game. "We didn't think anybody could beat us twice."

Hattiesburg came as close as anyone. The only other team to push Poplar Bluff to the limit all season was Jefferson City, which won the Mid-West National title last year.



Marcus Patillo Scores the Winning Run For The National Championship!

All Photos By Tim Crutchfield Studios

Poplar Bluff H.S. Team Members. (Bottom L to R) Coach Brown, Justin Shell, Jake Bagby, Coach Carda (2nd Row) Heath Willis, Nick Mockabee, (3rd Row) James Cox, Todd Montgomery, (Back Row) Marcus Patillo, Justin Tune, Chad King.

Poplar Bluff needed a four-run seventh-inning rally to edge Jefferson City for the State championship.

"I think everybody was more excited after winning State than we were after winning (Tuesday)." Stahl said. "I guess it was because of the way we won against Jefferson City. We needed to score four runs against them instead of just one, like we did (against Hattiesburg)."

Poplar Bluff's half of the eighth inning saw Shell and Stahl rap out consecutive singles, before Tune and Pattillo were hit.

"It was probably not what anybody expected to happen," Shell said. "But, we'll take it. We proved that we could play with any-

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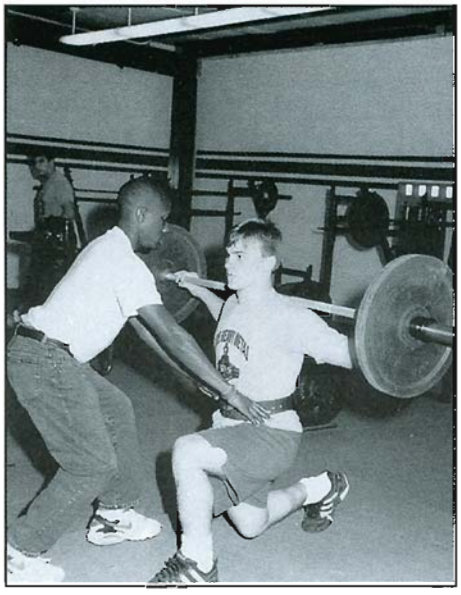
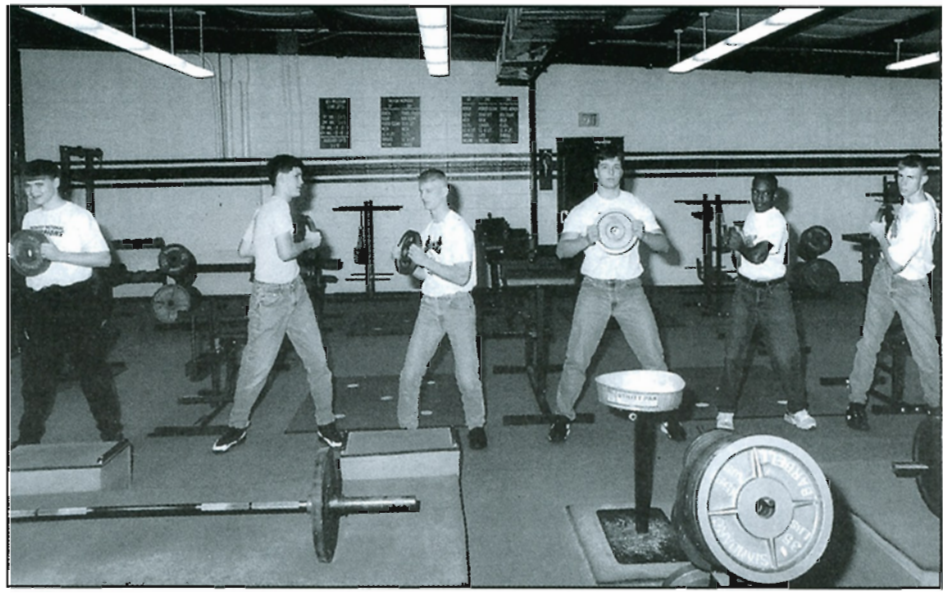


Ryan Pretz, 3-Sport Athlete Doing Lunges with Nick Mockabee Spotting



The Baseball Team Doing Oblique Twisters. The Team Trained The Morning Before They Left For The National Championship Games.

body. We had a great season. I'm kind of sad to see it end."

Who could blame him?

By leading Poplar Bluff to the championship, Shell upped his pitching record to 13-0. He retired 14 of the last 16 batters he faced, while holding Hattiesburg scoreless over the final four innings.

"We were down 3-2 and they had a chance to bust the game open," Carda said. "But, Justin kept us in the game. He battled. That's the way he's pitched all year. The last 3-4 innings — he seems to be at this strongest. He's a competitor. He wants to win and wants the ball, especially in that situation. And, our players want him to have the ball, too."

Poplar Bluff's two first-inning runs came on a Hattiesburg throwing error and a walk to Jake Bagby with the bases loaded. In the fifth, Nick Mockabee tripled and scored on James Cox's sacrifice fly.

The good start was probably just what Poplar Bluff needed after a couple base-running errors led to a loss in the first game.

In the sixth inning, a Poplar Bluff runner was picked off after taking too wide a turn at third base. In the seventh, Carda gave Ryan Pretz the steal sign with runners on first and third and one out. Pretz was thrown out at second, thus keeping Poplar Bluff from being able to tie the score on a sacrifice.

"I gambled and guessed wrong." Carda said. "We were sloppy offensively and defensively in the first game."

At the plate, Matt Stahl's three-run homer was the only offense Poplar Bluff could muster over the first six innings. It was the team's first round-tripper since Shell hit a homer in the season's first game.

Justin Shell, A 13-0 Pitching Record, With The Power Snatch

"I hit it solid, but I thought it was just a routine fly ball," Stahl said. "It kept going and going, though."

The players didn't dwell on the loss in between games.

"We knew Mississippi's a good team," Shell said. "They had come all the way back through the loser's bracket. A couple of us were uptight because we didn't win the first game. But, we knew we still had the second game."

"We wanted to come back and play hard," Pattillo said. "We kept saying that no team was going to beat us twice."

EDITORS NOTE

Coach Jim Brown, The Poplar Bluff Football and Strength Coach, wanted to express the fact that this baseball team works very hard, both on and off the field, and that many of the players are two and three sport athletes, with excellent work ethics. They attribute the the success of their team to the off the field workouts that sent them to the National Championship Game.

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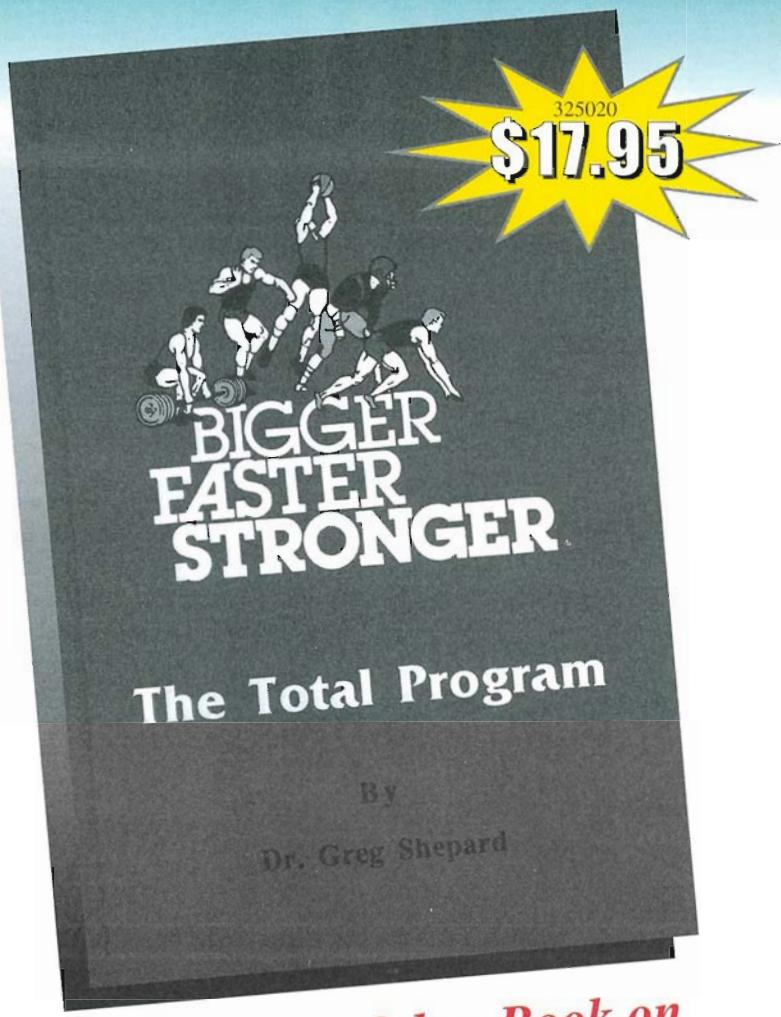

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Dead Lift	325	10/15/91	350	10/01/91	280	09/15/90
Clean	325	10/15/91	350	10/01/91	280	09/15/90
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40 Yard	4.3	01/15/92	4.8	12/01/91	4.8	01/15/91
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