

# Unbeatable team from Des Moines wins title

By J.R. Ogden  
Gazette sportswriter

Denny Linderbaum and LaPizza/Henry J's were a perfect match at the 58th ASA Major men's state fast-pitch tournament at the Kirkwood Softball Complex.

Neither Linderbaum or his Des Moines club were fancy or spectacular. They were just unbeatable.

LaPizza/Henry J's withstood a six-run rally Sunday and became Des Moines' first state fast-pitch champ since 1982 with a 9-6 victory over Fleck's-Miller High Life of Cedar Rapids.

Linderbaum allowed eight hits and all six Fleck's runs — only two earned — and needed relief help from Tom Bakey, but the 39-year-old veteran got the victory, his fifth of the weekend, and was named the tourney's Most Valuable Pitcher.

"This is my third state title. Once every six years," said Linderbaum, who helped C.R. Collins and the D.M. Bombers win state titles in 1976 and '82. "This is the sweetest."

The fact that Linderbaum is celebrating his 20th season in fast-pitch and won his first MVP award made this title sweet.

"This state title means more because of my age and I don't know if I'll get another one," said Linderbaum, who allowed 37 hits in 33 innings of work and had a 2.12 ERA.

Like Linderbaum, LaPizza/Henry J's didn't blow anybody away at the three-day meet. It scored a total of 24 runs in five games and allowed 16. But when it counted, Linderbaum and LaPizza had what it took.

"They didn't make nothing easy on me," Manager Jack Deaton said.

IN THE TITLE tilt, LaPizza/

## ASA MAJOR FAST-PITCH TOURNEY

Henry J's jumped out to an 8-0 lead, highlighted by Lou Yacinich's two-run single in the second inning and Greg Fitzgerald's two-run safety in the fourth.

But just when it looked like Fleck's was ready to fold, it came to life. Fleck's used five hits and four Des Moines errors to pull back into contention, 8-6, in the sixth inning. Tom Busch and Robb Lassen both smacked two-run singles in the big inning.

Bakey then came in and cooled Fleck's with one-hit relief over the final two frames.

"They really rose to the occasion and deserve all the credit in the world," Fleck's Manager Bill Schulte said of LaPizza.

For Fleck's, it was its second runner-up finish in a state meet this year. Fleck's also was second in the ISC tourney.

"It's like kissing your sister, I guess. But that's all right," Schulte said.

By winning the state tourney, LaPizza/Henry J's automatically qualifies for the ASA national, Sept. 9-17 in Bloomington, Ill. Fleck's, third-place finisher Quad-City Rebels and fourth-place Teleconnect of C.R. all advance to the ASA Mid-America Regional, Sept. 2-5 in St. Louis.

LaPizza's Bob Fontana was named the meet's Most Valuable Player after going 2-for-2 with two RBI in the finale. He finished with seven hits in 15 at-bats, drove in six runs and made several key defensive plays. Teammate Ben Edwards also was named to the all-tourney team, going 7-for-15 with four RBI over the weekend.

LaPizza advanced to the cham-

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