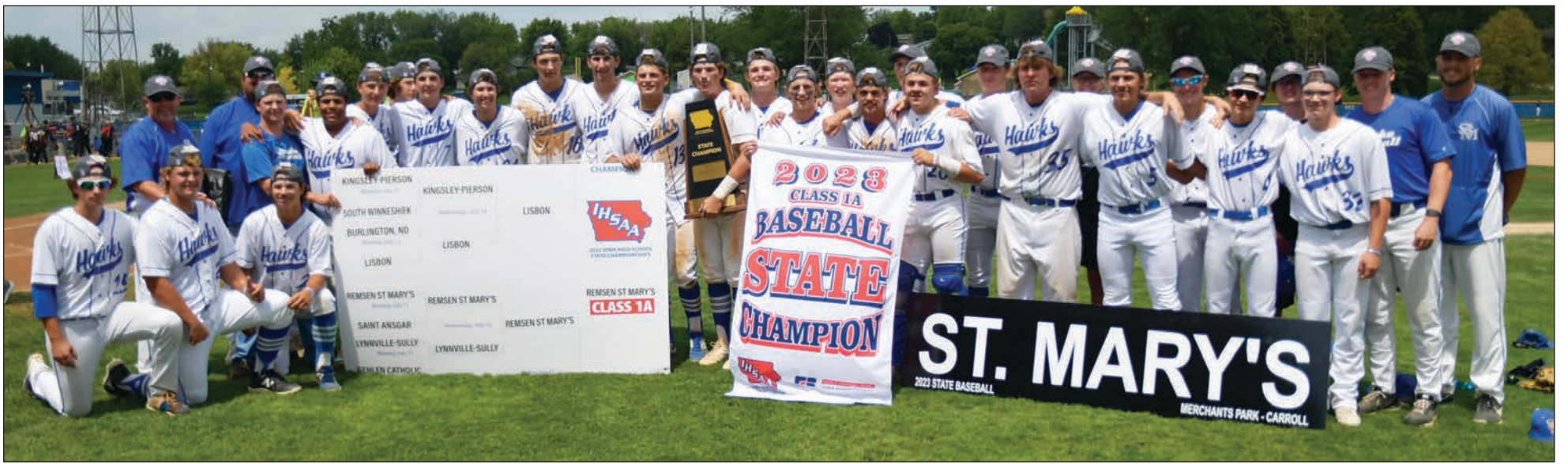


SPORTS



(SENTINEL PHOTO BY ALLEN HAMIL)

The Remsen St. Mary's baseball team poses with their state championship trophy, banner and bracket after winning the Class 1A title game 7-4 over Lisbon on Friday. The championship was the fifth summer state title in school history and eighth overall baseball championship.

Remsen St. Mary's wins 1A baseball championship Hawks top Lisbon for fifth summer, eighth overall baseball title

BY ALLEN HAMIL
Sports Editor

CARROLL — Remsen St. Mary's claimed their fifth summer state baseball championship, joining three fall titles for their eighth overall title in the sport, with a 7-4 win over Lisbon in the Class 1A title game at Merchants Park on Friday.

RSM Head Coach Dean Harpenau was a senior on the 1985 state championship team from St. Mary's and was glad to see his talented group of eight seniors also go out on top in their final game.

"I'm proud of them and it's great. I got to play for Marv Thelen and got to experience all these great emotions of winning my last game and now these seniors are getting that experience too. Just proud of these guys and love these guys," Harpenau said.

Cael Ortmann, one of the seniors, described his feeling of winning the state title.

"It's the best feeling. We got this opportunity during football twice, but I mean baseball is just a little sweeter coming from a baseball school. Just to be able to get that state championship, there's so many good teams in 1A around here and to be able to be the last one standing is just the greatest feeling," Ortmann said.

Hawks break ice early, build up lead

After not scoring until the sixth inning in their quarterfinal round win and scoring just one run in their semifinal game, Harpenau was glad to see his second-seeded team's offense build up an early lead with a run in the first and three in the third.

"It felt good that we put a run up to release the pressure," Harpenau said.

Bunkers hit a ball up the middle to begin the game against Hunter Clark, who gave up just three hits in a complete game shutout win the quarterfinals as the fifth-seeded Lions (27-5) beat Burlington Notre Dame.

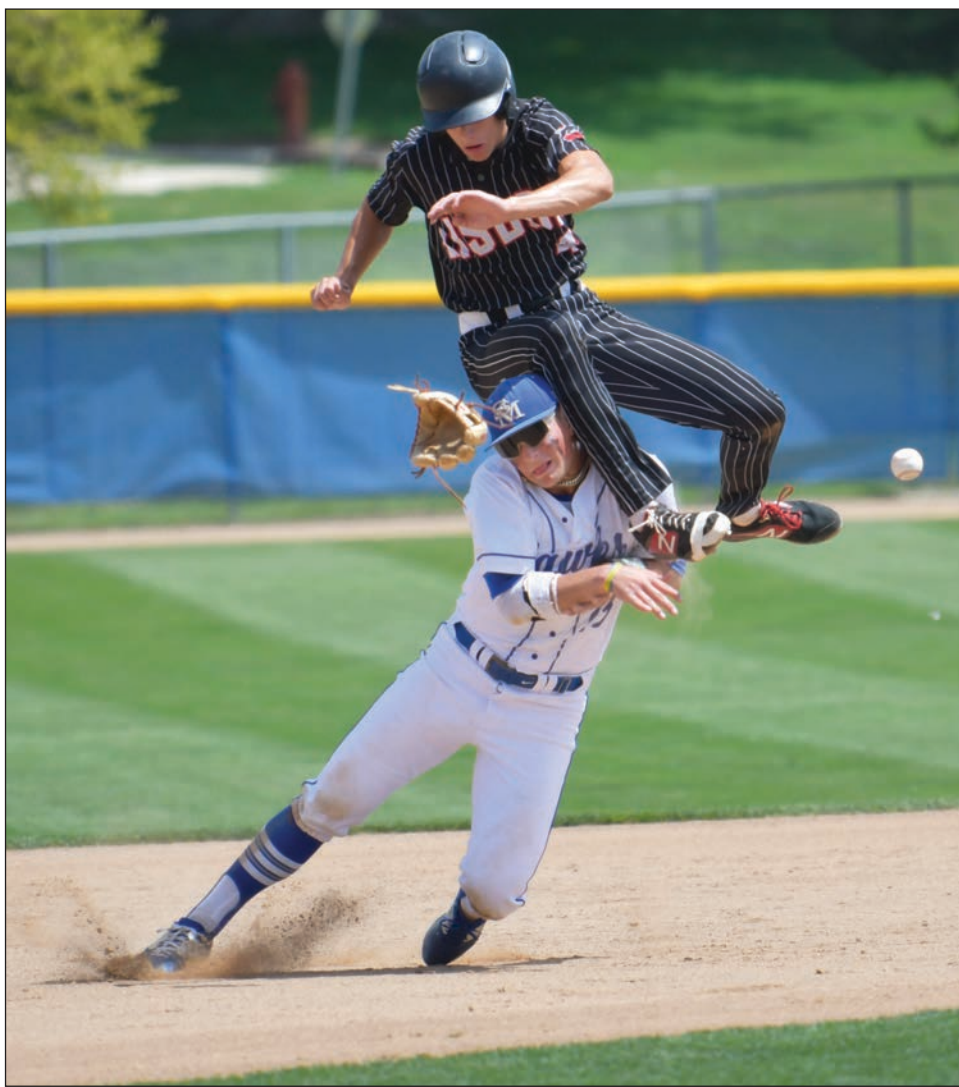
"Jaxon going up there hitting a single, it put confidence in everyone else that we could hit this pitcher. It just carried on as other guys got hits too," Ortmann said.

Alex Schroeder successfully dropped down a sacrifice bunt on a pitch up at his eyes. The Hawks scored on the next play as Ortmann drove him home with a double.

The top of the order started things off again in the third for the Hawks and once more came through. Bunkers reached on a hit-by-pitch and Schroeder dropped down another good bunt, this time beating it out as he placed it perfectly away from the defense near first base.

Collin Homan, who reached on a base hit in the first inning, came away with an even bigger hit in the third inning as he sent the ball towards the scoreboard in right field and slid into third base safely with a triple to drive in two runs and make it 3-0.

"First at-bat, I was hunting fastball and he came out with a first-pitch curveball and the



(SENTINEL PHOTO BY ALLEN HAMIL)

Luke Czarnecki crashes into Jaxon Bunkers as the RSM shortstop tried to make a play in the 1A state championship game. The Lisbon runner was called out for interference.

second pitch fastball I got a little bloop single," Homan said. "The second at-bat I thought he was going to go with the same thing, so I went up with the approach of curveball and I crushed it and it just kept carrying."

Hunter Pick drove in the run from third with a base hit to make it 4-0.

"Ever since last year when we lost that game, that game pushed us and got us through everything," Pick said, referencing last year's 8-7 loss to New London in the championship game. "When we got those two losses earlier in the season our coach made bracelets that said, 'The grind pays off in the end' and he's not wrong. The grind really does pay off."

Lions roar back

Lisbon roared back for three runs in the top of the fourth with a two-out rally. Two singles and a hit batter loaded the bases for Aiden Jensen. The DH was able to clear the bases with a single to right field which was misplayed by Ryan Willman, allowing Jensen to reach second base and all three runners aboard to come home.

Homan had worked out of a bit of the jam in the first by getting a strikeout to strand a couple baserunners. He gave up a leadoff double to start the second, but Luke Czarnecki was called out for interference a few plays later as he crashed into shortstop Jaxon Bunkers on a ground ball as that potential rally fizzled out.

Homan had a 1-2-3 third inning before the three runs scored in the fourth frame. The sophomore ended the fourth inning with his fifth strikeout of the day in what would be the final batter he faced.

"I threw my whole arsenal at them today, but I think my sinker was my go-to," Homan said. "It makes people roll over the most and gets me grounders. They were finding gaps sometimes, that's just part of the game, but just got to keep throwing strikes."

RSM regains momentum, seals the win

While the Hawks still had the lead, the three-run fourth inning took away some of their momentum.

"The seniors said we've got to respond again and we came

back with three," Harpenau said.

The three runs came in the bottom of the fifth. A walk to Schroeder followed by Ortmann's second double of the game put runners on second and third with nobody out. With Homan up next with two hits already and first base vacant, the Lions decided to intentionally walk the RSM slugger to load the bases.

Pick drove in the first run of the inning as he grounded out to the first baseman. An RBI single from Landon Waldschmitt made it 6-3 and Isaiah

Gerrietts drove in the team's next run with a sacrifice bunt.

Ortmann said the offense finally got comfortable at the plate in their third state tournament game.

"Those first two games, we faced two of the best pitchers we've seen all year. Some of the two best pitchers in the state tournament in 1A," Ortmann said. "We knew coming into this third game, it couldn't get much tougher than that. We've seen pitchers like that so we knew what we had to do and it worked."

The Hawks finished with nine hits in the game from seven different players as they roughed up Clark for seven earned runs. He had given up just five earned runs in his 44 innings of work entering the game.

"Jaxon wanted some insurance runs, so we gave him some insurance runs so he could work with something and it worked out," Pick said.

The Lions scored a run in the sixth on a double steal attempt. Catcher Waldschmitt was able to throw out the runner trying to steal second base, but the runner on third came home for a run.

It was the only run given up by Bunkers in relief as he struck out two in three innings on the hill.

Bunkers got the first two batters out in the seventh then gave up an infield single to Alex Block.

Ortmann said the anticipation of the final out was exhilarating.

"That last inning, just the anticipation of being that close to a state championship. Just to finish it off, there's just no better feeling," Ortmann said.

Bunkers got the final out by striking out Landon Waldschmitt as the Hawks clinched their first title since the beginning of

their run of eight consecutive trips to state in 2016.

Seniors' swan song

The state championship capped off a successful career for the senior class at Remsen St. Mary's. Along with being members of the last five of the eight baseball teams to make it to state, the group also made it to state each year in basketball, won two 8-player football championships and even chipped in a state golf appearance earlier this year.

This year's seniors helped the Hawks finish 32-2 on the baseball diamond in 2023.

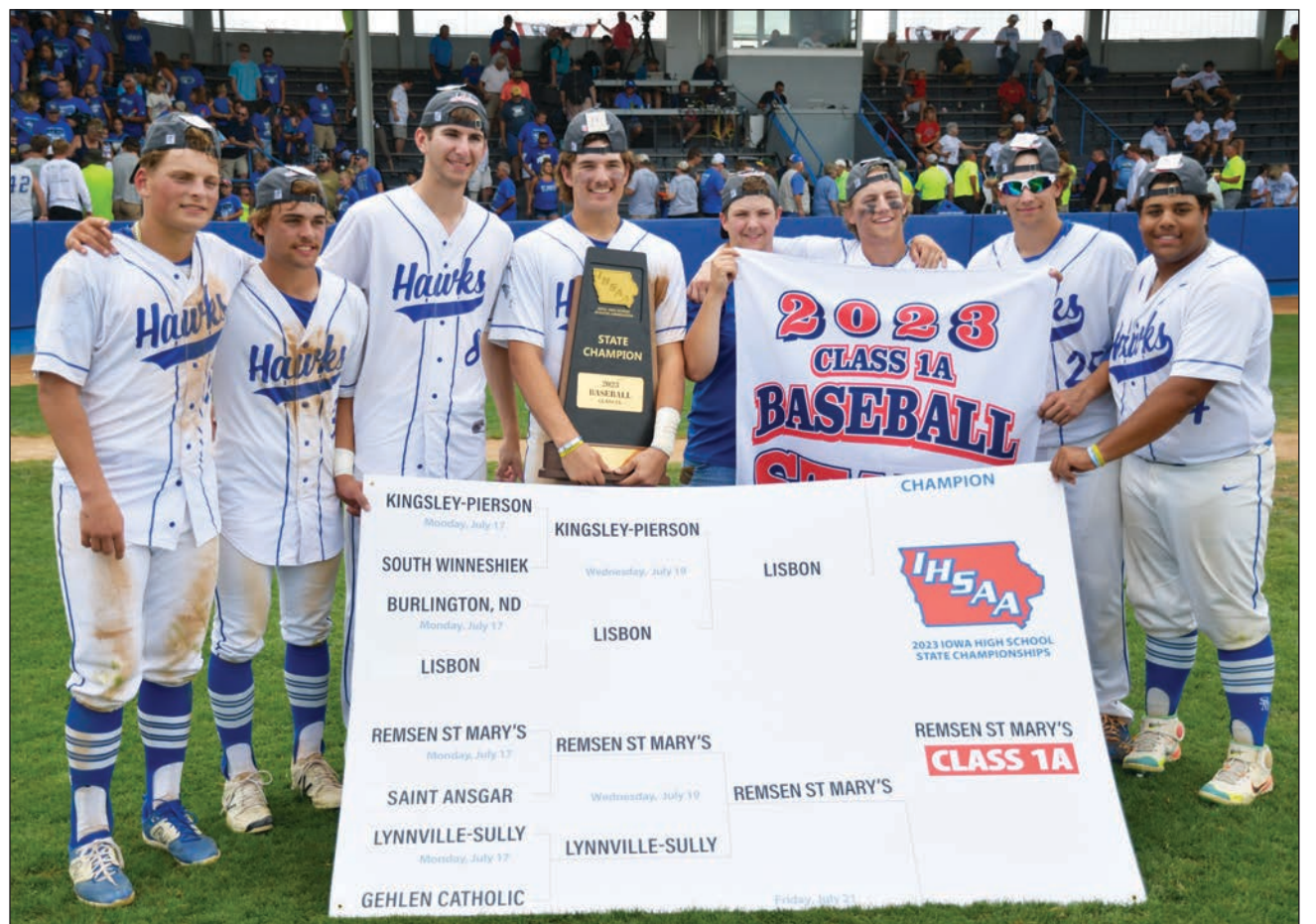
"It just shows that hard work pays off. From second grade to coming into high school in eighth grade, January, we didn't get it done the first four years. We had the pleasure of making it to state and having really good games, but finally being able to finish it out is great," Bunkers said.

Alex Schroeder, Ryan Willman, Brenden Fisch, Jaxon Bunkers, Cael Ortmann, Nathan Britt, Kadden Groepper and Isaiah Gerrietts are the members of the senior class which will be remembered for years to come.

"They definitely have left their mark on Remsen St. Mary's. People will be talking about them for quite a few years," Harpenau said.

Homan said he learned a lot from this year's seniors and hopes to carry on their leadership into the next couple of seasons.

"These guys have put in a lot of work. They were great leaders," Homan said. "I hope I can be the same way and encourage my teammates to work hard every single day. These guys came to practice and games with the mentality to win and they're winners. We've all got that mentality in us now."



(SENTINEL PHOTO BY ALLEN HAMIL)

Remsen St. Mary's senior class poses with their trophy, banner and bracket following the win. Jaxon Bunkers, Alex Schroeder, Ryan Willman, Cael Ortmann, Nathan Britt, Brenden Fisch, Isaiah Gerrietts and Kadden Groepper were members of a senior class which made state baseball all five years and won a state title, finished as state champions in football twice, made it to state in basketball all four years and also chipped in a state golf appearance this past spring.