FNB avenges earlier loss, ends year with 9-5 win
His teammates' reception committee awaits Joel Van Lanen (holding his helmet) after his three-run home run in the sixth inning of First National Bank's 9-5 win June 29.

CRYSTAL FALLS—Talk about a nice way to end a season!

The First National Bank squad in the Senior League finished its season June 29 with a 9-5 win over North Country, in a game played at Runkle Lake Park.

When the teams met earlier this season, North Country won in a game shortened by the mercy rule. Revenge was sweet, made sweeter by winning pitcher Joel Van Lanen, who hit a three-run home run to insure the win.

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FNB never trailed after scoring four times in the second inning. Joey Soucy's bases-loaded single drove in two runs, Mykel Zaritz's bases-loaded walk and Hank Steiro's fielder's choice brought in two more.

Van Lanen limited North Country to two hits in the first three innings, but the visitors scored in the fourth when a strikeout victim reached on a wild pitch, took third on an infield error and scored on a passed ball.

FNB got that run back in the last of the fourth when Soucy singled and scored on Steiro's double to center, making it a 5-1 lead.

It stayed 5-1 until the top of the sixth, when North Country scored twice. After a leadoff double, Van Lanen retired the next two men and seemed to get out of the inning with a strikeout—but strike three was a wild pitch, everybody was safe, and the run scored.

The second run scored on a steal and throwing error. After a walk, Zaritz took over in relief. He gave up a walk to his first hitter, but catcher Steven West pulled the plug on North Country's inning when his peg to shortstop Steiro nailed an attempted base-stealer in the act.

NC's rally got them within two, 5-3, but FNB ended their comeback hopes in the last of the sixth. Soucy and West led off with singles, and Zaritz's hit to left drove in Soucy, who was 3-for-3 in the game.

Steiro's ground-out advanced both runners, and Van Lanen followed with a long drive over the right field fence that made it 8-3. Two walks, some steals and a long double added two runs for North Country in the seventh, but Zaritz ended the inning, game and season by coaxing an infield grounder.

End season, start celebration: Teammates dumped the big plastic water jug on Van Lanen's back—ice and all.

Van Lanen pitched 5 2/3 innings, giving up four hits and three walks while striking out eight. Soucy was the only FNB batter with more than one hit and scored three times. Van Lanen's dinger gave him three RBIs, while Zaritz, Steiro and Soucy drove in two runs each.

• On June 26, FNB got 10 hits but lost to Cooper Office Supply of Iron Mountain 14-8. Zaritz

and West split pitching duties.

Steiro led the team with three hits, including a triple. FNB also got a double and single from both Van Lanen and West; doubles from Colton Neville and Jayce Brockhagen; and singles from Zane Sarafiny and Zaritz.