CRYSTAL FALLS—Make it six straight wins for the Poles, who again swatted the softball all over Runkle Lake Park Aug. 3 in the annual Finn-Pole game.

Unlike last year, though, the Finns battled out of the 24-4 mineshaft they found themselves in after three innings and made a game of it. They got as close as one run late in the game, but the Poles held on for a 37-29 win.

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That's a total of 66 runs—and nearly half of them (32) were scored in consecutive half-innings.

The Poles already led 11-4 going into the last of the third inning (Gar Robarge's two-run triple in the first, Dave Graff's three-run homer in the second) and then added another 13 runs in the third to take that 24-4 lead.

Four Finn errors that inning gave the Poles a big boost. Beside several infield miscues and a dropped pop-up, highlights included two-run singles by Mike Yackel, Mike Wodzinski and Keith Graves and a three-run homer from Joe Vrancic.

The Finns were now 20 runs behind. But it's just the top of the fourth inning! Plenty of game left! The Helsinki rally caps came on, and the Finns nearly made up the entire gap in one inning, helped by five Pole errors. Their 19-run explosion cut the Poles' lead to 24-23.

Aside from dropped fly balls and a wild throw, highlights included Wade Floodstrand's two-run single, two-run doubles by Dan Kivimaki and Keith Latva and then Bob Woollard's two-run homer (his second of the game). All in the same half inning!

As quickly as the planets aligned for crazy run-scoring, they moved apart again, and the game settled down. Maybe the batters were getting arm-weary. The Poles scored three in the last of the fourth (27-23) and neither team scored in the fifth.

Down 30-25 after seven, the Finns scored four in the eighth on four hits and an error, again getting within a single run (30-29). The Poles said "None of that stuff!" and battled back with seven, as Scott Gussert hit a three-run homer and Nathaniel Kudwa smacked a three-run double.

Now behind 37-29, the Finns got two runners on base in the top of the ninth but couldn't bring anyone around.

We didn't have time to send the scoresheet out to an accountant to figure out all the RBIs. As for the other stats:

Poles—Hits, Bob Bradley 6; Keith Graves 5; Joe Vrancic, Dave Graff, Mike Yackel, Gar Robarge, 4 each. Runs scored: Graves, Vrancic, Graff, 5 each; Nathaniel Kudwa, Bradley, 4 each. Home runs: Vrancic, Graff, Al Smith, Gussert. Triple: Robarge, Two doubles each: Graves, Bradley, Robarge.

Finns—Hits, Scott Kivimaki, 5; Josh Ketola, Wayde Floodstrand, Jim Helgren, 4 each. Runs scored: Bob Woollard, 5; Kivimaki, Ketola, 4 each. Woollard hit the only two Finn homers. Five players had one double each.

Finns 310 (19)02 040 – 29
Poles 65(13) 301 27x -- 37