

Matt Farley

Highland Park

1996 MVP

Class A

In his own words: I had never played third base in my life. How hard could it be?

Our Highland Park team had won the title in '93 so we knew what it took to win. After a couple of frustrating years, our manager Jim Lawton added a few players and built a juggernaut for 1996. Most games we started our typical lineup of 7 leftys at the plate. We didn't have pitching depth, but we had high quality arms. I think we only lost 6 games all year!

Then we limped into the '96 State Tourney with 2 hands tied behind our backs. Third baseman, Cory Lynch, was out and on crutches after injuring his knee in the all-star game. Then we lost shortstop Bo Peters to a wrist fracture HBP. Not many teams can survive injuries to two of their top players. So, Keith Johnson (Duck) played short alongside Mark Herzog at second and somehow I convinced Lawty to let me play third.

I had absolutely no idea what I was doing so I put my feet in the infield grass and tried to avoid getting hit in the face. Expectations of me were low, so every time I made a play it was a bonus and the boys got a charge out of it. I had nothing to lose and we even turned some double plays!

We pounded Lyons Pub 12-6 in the opener and had a close one with Bloomington in round two setting up a winners' bracket final with '95's champ Rosetown. Billy Pitcher dominated on the mound against his former team and we put up seven runs in an early inning and smoked 'em 10-2. We were loose and our offense was putting up big innings.

Minnetonka came out of the losers bracket and had to beat us twice. They held us down most of the game but we busted out for an eleven-run seventh inning!! It was amazing... nobody could get out. I had a 2-run triple and grand slam that inning and we held them off for our second state title!

I was so fortunate to play in six state tournament finals. I played on some wonderful teams with some great talent including back-to-back Class B titles with Dundas in '98 and '99. But the '96 Highland Park team would've given anybody a tough game. Playing in a lineup of Herzog, Selander, Lynch, Peters, and Steve and Danny Nayman was a privilege.

When you played Highland Park you needed a thick skin and your best game because we were going to chirp you, Lawty was going to get a pinch-hit blooper to right and we were going to beat you.



- Matt Farley, Highland Park, 1996
- Third Baseman
- Handled 42 chances without an error
- Batted .400, going 12 for 30
- Hit three home runs and three triples
- Plated 13 RBI



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