



WINNIPEG GOLDEYES DAILY CLIPPINGS

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10th, 2022

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REDHAWKS DOMINATE GOLDEYES TO FORCE RUBBER MATCH

JOSHUA FREY-SAM – WINNIPEG FREE PRESS – SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10th

The Winnipeg Goldeyes found themselves on the wrong side of a hot arm on Friday.

The Fish fell to the Fargo-Moorhead Redhawks 8-3 in Game 2 of the American Association West Division semifinals on a cool overcast evening at Newman Outdoor Field.

The best-of-three series is tied 1-1 heading into the fateful rubber match tonight in Fargo.

Redhawks pitcher Tyler Grauer took advantage of a Goldeyes lineup that was without league-MVP Max Murphy, who broke his leg in a home-plate collision during Wednesday's series opener. The southpaw hurler conceded just three hits and one run while striking out five batters in six innings.

Toeing the bump for the third-seed Goldeyes, Luis Ramirez had a roller-coaster of a night.

After a promising first inning, in which Ramirez retired the Redhawks in order, striking out two, the hard-throwing righty struggled against Fargo's heavy left-handed lineup in the second frame.

For the second consecutive game, the Redhawks drew first blood by way of a John Silviano home run. The right fielder's second blast of the series was a two-run shot lined over the centre-field wall.

The Redhawks, who hit 115 dingers and churned 5.85 runs per game during the regular season (fourth-most), appeared to let out some frustration after garnering just one run against Goldeyes' starting pitcher Landen Bourassa – and just three runs overall — in Game 1, going deep three times in Game 2.

Two batters later, Evan Alexander punched a two-bagger to left field. A couple of wild pitches from Ramirez advanced him to third, and eventually, home for an easy run.

Peter Maris later capped a monster inning for the second-seeded Redhawks when he crushed a base-clearing two-run shot to swell the host's lead to five runs.

Ramirez, who, despite an otherwise impressive campaign that saw him finish second among all pitchers in wins (10) and strikeouts (133), had struggled against the Redhawks this season to the tune of 15 hits, nine earned runs and seven walks in 16 innings of work (three starts).

While the critical damage had already been done, Ramirez managed to settle in before being pulled. He ended his night allowing eight hits, six runs and one walk while striking out eight batters in five innings of work.

Just when the Fish were floundering for any sort of offence, Ian Sagdal showed a heartbeat for the Winnipeg club in the sixth inning. The third baseman, who will be leaned on to replace the production left behind by Murphy, scorched a leadoff home run over the right field wall to break the goose egg and draw the visitors within five runs.

The Goldeyes' pulse grew when Michael Crouse pulled a two-run bomb over the right field wall in the top of the seventh inning. Crouse, a Canadian-born outfielder acquired from the Chicago Dogs ahead of the trade deadline, drew into the lineup following Murphy's injury.

The Fish couldn't muster any more runs in the last two innings, leaving the park without a series sweep.

REDHAWKS FORCE SATURDAY SERIES DECIDER AFTER TAKING GAME 2 OVER GOLDEYES **SCOTT BILLECK – WINNIPEG SUN – SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10th**

The Winnipeg Goldeyes and rival Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks will need a third and decisive Game 3 to determine who will move on to the second round in the American Association playoffs.

The RedHawks, fuelled by a five-run second inning, staved off elimination on Friday night at Newman Outdoor Field in Fargo, taking Game 2 of the best-of-three divisional semifinal 8-3.

Game 3 is slated for Saturday in Fargo, with the winner set to face the reigning American Association champion Kansas City Monarchs, who swept the Lincoln Saltdogs after an 8-3 win of their own on Friday.

Fargo engineered a pair of two-run home runs in the second, and drove in another to take an early 5-0 lead, adding three more runs in the fifth, sixth and eighth, respectively, en route to victory.

After the Goldeyes lit up the RedHawks with a five-run third inning of their own in Wednesday's Game 1, the club's bats weren't as hot on Friday.

Ian Sagdal homered in the top of the fifth inning to break the goose egg, one of four hits the Fargo lefty Tyler Grauer allowed in six-plus innings of work. Grauer, who picked up the win, walked two and struck out five of the 24 batters he faced.

Goldeyes ace Luis Ramirez, who was 10-7 during the regular season while finishing second in the Association in strikeouts, allowed six runs on eight hits while striking out eight in five innings.

Winnipeg struggled at the plate, missing league MVP Max Murphy's offensive prowess after the 29-year-old broke his leg in a violent collision at home plate in Wednesday's game.

After the Goldeyes left two stranded in the top of the second, the RedHawks went to work in the bottom half of the inning.

Leobaldo Pina reached on a lead-off single before John Silviano ripped a two-run shot over the right-field wall for his second dinger in as many games in the series to put Fargo ahead 2-0. Two batters later, Evan Alexander would get on base with a double before advancing to third on a wild pitch and then later scoring on another ill-timed throw from Ramirez to make it 3-0.

Peter Maris jacked the second homer of the inning, his two-run shot sailing down the first-base line to increase the lead to 5-0.

Grauer settled in, sitting down seven straight before Michael Crouse smacked a lead-off single to start the fifth. He, too, would be left stranded on base.

Fargo would threaten again in the fourth, with Alexander, who went 3-for-4 on the night, hitting a ground-rule double to put the RedHawks in scoring position. A couple of batters later, Christian Correa, who was involved in the Murphy incident on Wednesday, crushed a ball deep to right centre field that forced Reggie Pruitt Jr. to hit the afterburners to hunt it down at the warning track, just getting underneath it for the sensational grab to halt any further damage by the RedHawks.

Sagdal's solo shot in the sixth clawed a run back to make it 6-1. Fargo tacked on another run in the bottom of the sixth, with Alec Olund taking fastball for a ride on a solo homer of his own to restore the six-run edge, 7-1.

A lead-off double by Goldeyes outfielder Jacob Rhinesmith gave the Fish some momentum, and Michael Crouse brought him home on a two-run homer on Winnipeg's next at-bat to cut the deficit to 7-3.

It's as far as Winnipeg would go, stranding two more in the top of the eighth, with Crouse, who was 2-for-4 with two RBIs, going down swinging this time to end the threat.

Fargo would score one more with the bases loaded in the bottom half of the eighth.

REDHAWKS RIDE BIG SECOND TO EVEN SERIES. DOUBLE ELIMINATION GAME SATURDAY **STEVE SCHUSTER – WINNIPEG GOLDEYES – FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9th**

FARGO, ND – The Winnipeg Goldeyes lost 8-3 to the Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks in Game Two of the American Association Division Series at Newman Outdoor Field on Friday night.

The best-of-three series is now tied 1-1.

The RedHawks took early control of the game with a five-run bottom of the second. Leobaldo Pina led off with a single down the right field line, setting up a two-run home run to right-centre from John Silviano. Two batters later, Evan Alexander doubled down the left field line and took third on a wild pitch. After Alec Olund walked, Alexander scored the RedHawks' third run on a two-out wild pitch. Peter Maris capped the rally with a two-run home run to right.

In the bottom of the fifth, Manuel Boscan doubled to right-centre leading off and scored on a wild pitch on a third strike to Silviano.

The Goldeyes cut into the RedHawks' lead in the top of the sixth when **Ian Sagdal** crushed a leadoff home run down the right field line.

Fargo-Moorhead pushed the advantage to 7-1 in the bottom of the sixth on a solo homer to left from Olund.

Jacob Rhinesmith doubled down the right field line leading off the top of the seventh. After Tanner Riley relieved RedHawks' starter Tyler Grauer, **Michael Crouse** smacked an opposite-field, two-run home run to right-centre.

The RedHawks' scored the game's final run in the bottom of the eight on a Boscan bases-loaded, fielder's choice that brought home Alexander.

Grauer (1-0) picked up the win, allowing two earned runs on four hits over six-plus innings. Grauer walked two and struck out five.

Goldeyes' starter **Luis Ramirez** (0-1) took the loss, allowing six earned runs on eight hits in five innings. Ramirez walked one and struck out eight.

The winner-take-all Game Three of the American Association Division Series is Saturday night at Newman Outdoor Field. First pitch is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. **Freisis Adames** (0-0, 0.00) faces left-hander Peyton Wigginton (0-0, 0.00). All the action can be heard locally on CJNU 93.7 FM and worldwide at www.cjnu.ca

For information on Winnipeg Goldeyes' 2023 season tickets, individual tickets, group outings, and 10-game mini packs, visit the Goldeyes' official website at www.goldeyes.com

BITTERSWEET HONOUR FOR GOLDEYES MURPHY

MIKE MCINTYRE – WINNIPEG FREE PRESS – FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9th

Max Murphy wasn't in a celebratory mood on Thursday. Instead, the Winnipeg Goldeyes right-fielder was undergoing surgery for a gruesome broken leg suffered Wednesday night at Shaw Park.

As he begins the long road to recovery, the 29-year-old can take solace in the fact a season that has been painfully cut short was deemed by his peers to be the best in the business.

Murphy is the winner of the 2022 American Association Player of the Year Award, which was voted on by the league's 12 field managers, along with executives and media representatives.

He is the just the fourth member of the Fish to capture the honour, joining Terry Lee (1996 and 1996), Sean Hearn (1998) and Josh Romanski (2017).

Murphy powered the Goldeyes offense all year, batting .308 with a league-leading 31 home runs (tying Winnipeg's all-time franchise mark set by Kyle Martin last year) and league-leading 97 RBI. The Robbinsdale, Minn., product started all 100 games and tied for the league-lead in assists with 12.

He even made seven appearances as a pitcher in mop-up duty, striking out seven batters in six innings.

Murphy smashed a double in his first at-bat Wednesday night as the best-of-three West Division semi-final against Fargo got underway. He followed that up with another two-bagger in the third inning which drove in a run, only to have it all come to a stunning halt a few minutes later in a violent home-plate collision with RedHawks catcher Christian Correa.

Murphy ended up airborne as Correa tried to field an errant throw from pitcher Kevin McGovern and blocked his path. Although he was awarded with the run, Murphy was in clear distress. Manager Rick Forney and medical staff rushed to his side and a stretcher was brought on to the field. He was stabilized and taken to hospital.

Winnipeg went on to win the game 6-3.

"We're not talking about just losing the best player on our team. We're losing the best player in the league, he's the league MVP. You can't replace him," said Forney.

Despite the huge hole in the lineup, the Goldeyes can advance to the division final with a win on Friday night in North Dakota. Game 3, if necessary, would go Saturday evening in Fargo.

Murphy was originally drafted by his hometown Minnesota Twins in 2014 (ninth round) and eventually reached the Triple-A level in the Arizona organization in 2019 after spending three years in the American Association playing for the St. Paul Saints.

After being released by the Diamondbacks in 2021, Murphy signed with the Goldeyes and has spent the past two seasons in Winnipeg.

GOLDEYES RALLYING FOR MURPHY AS THEY TRY TO CLOSE OUT DIVISIONAL SEMIFINAL

SCOTT BILLECK – WINNIPEG SUN – FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9th

As far as Rick Forney is concerned, the loss of Max Murphy, as devastating as it is for the Winnipeg Goldeyes, isn't the end of the road for their playoff hopes.

While you can't replace the 29-year-old outfielder, who led the American Association in homers (31) and RBIs (96) and was named the league's player of the year on Thursday, Forney and the Fish have no choice but to divert their gaze from Murphy's gruesome injury during their Game 1 victory against the Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks at Shaw Park on Wednesday night.

The Goldeyes drew first blood in the best-of-three divisional semifinal, racking up five runs in the third inning, propelled by Murphy right before his violent collision at the plate with RedHawks catcher Christian Correa.

"You can't replace him," Forney said in the immediate aftermath. "Does that mean we're not going to win? Absolutely not. Does one person have to step up? No. It's just going to take a collective, group effort and see what happens."

Make no mistake — Forney was dejected as he sat in his office chair in the lower depths of Winnipeg's ballpark. He was one of the first on the scene just behind home plate, where Murphy landed after being sent airborne from the impact with Correa.

The evidence of something sinister was instantaneous, with Murphy down in considerable agony trying to keep his broken leg straight while Forney rubbed his back in an effort to console his player.

It was tough to watch, and Shaw Park fell silent for nearly 20 minutes as paramedics worked to stabilize the injury.

Forney said as much after and credited his players for keeping their wits about them as they went on to win the game 6-3.

In his words, it could have easily fallen apart.

Without their talisman, Winnipeg will have to go to Newman Outdoor Field in Fargo, regroup, and try and find a way to punch their ticket to the divisional finals. Game 2 is set for Friday night, with a decisive Game 3, if necessary, slated for Saturday evening.

"We've prided ourselves all season, and it's just part of being a Goldeye, is that our team cares a lot about camaraderie and being close," left-handed pitcher Travis Seabrooke said from Fargo on Thursday. "It's not just position players going to always go and do their thing and us pitchers do our thing separately. We're all friends in the locker room, friends outside the field and we care a lot about each other."

Murphy's injury has provided a bit of a rallying cry for the ball club.

"Absolutely it is (a rallying cry)," Seabrooke said. "You hate to see that kind of thing happen and we're going to try as much as we can to go earn one for Max."

The Goldeyes recorded back-to-back wins against Fargo just once all season, taking the final two games of a three-game set in early July. They were 5-7 overall in their 12 meetings throughout the season, with eight of those 12 games decided by two or fewer runs.

Winnipeg did well to neutralize Goldeyes legend Kevin McGovern, with the RedHawk's ace lasting just three innings after getting rung up for five runs (four of them earned) on 16 batters faced. McGovern was one of the best pitchers in the Association this season, going 10-3 with a 3.69 ERA while striking out a league-high 141 batters across 126.2 innings of work.

There's not much let-up coming on Friday as Fargo will send Tyler Grauer to the mound. He went 10-5 with a 3.50 ERA, striking out 103 in 125.2 innings pitched.

Winnipeg will counter with Luis Ramirez, who started a team-high 21 games for Winnipeg, carving out a 10-7 record with a 4.51 ERA and 133 strikeouts for some of the best numbers from a starting pitcher in the league.

Ramirez will be looking to emulate Game 1 starter Landen Bourassa, who went seven innings while allowing just one run off of four hits while striking out three en route to the win.

"He's been one of, if not the best, pitchers in the league this year, so it's definitely good knowing he's going to take the mound for us tomorrow night," Seabrooke said.

The RedHawks showed how dangerous they can be, cranking a homer with two outs and two strikes against in the eighth, followed by a two-out, two-strike triple to spice things up late.

"There's no quit in that team," Forney said. "They won a lot of games, and it's not by accident. They're always calm. They play with a lot of poise and composure."

Despite the hiccups, the bullpen was able to pull through. Couple that with those early runs, and the team is playing the right kind of baseball at the right time of the year.

As for Friday's Game 2, there's no needed change for the Goldeyes in the mentality department.

"This is game one of two for us," Forney said. "You can't change who you are."

RALLY FOR MAX: MURPHY VOTED LEAGUE'S BEST PLAYER

STEVE SCHUSTER – WINNIPEG GOLDEYES – THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 8th

WINNIPEG, MB – Winnipeg Goldeyes' right fielder **Max Murphy** has won the 2022 American Association Player of the Year Award as announced by the league on Thursday.

The award was voted on by the league's field managers, executives, and media representatives.

Murphy hit .308 while starting all 100 regular season games in right field, and led the American Association in both home runs (31) and RBI (97). The 31 home runs tied the Goldeyes' single-season record set by **Kyle Martin** in 2021, and rank tied for second in American Association history. The Robbinsdale, Minnesota native hit safely in 72 of 100 games, and blasted three home runs on August 27th in the first game of a double header at Fargo-Moorhead. Murphy also tied for the American Association lead with 12 outfield assists, which were the most by a Goldeye since 1999. Additionally, Murphy made seven appearances as a pitcher, striking out seven batters in six innings.

Murphy was 2-for-2 with two doubles and an RBI in the Goldeyes' 6-3 win in Game One of the American Association Division Series on Wednesday before exiting the game due to injury in the bottom of the third inning. 2022 marks the seventh time in eight professional seasons Murphy has helped a team to the playoffs.

Murphy is in his second year with the Goldeyes, and hit .307 with 13 home runs, 71 RBI, and a league-best 31 doubles for Winnipeg in 2021. The 29-year-old also played three seasons for the St. Paul Saints from 2018-20, earning All-Star honours in 2019 before having his contract purchased by the Arizona Diamondbacks.

A right-handed hitter and fielder, Murphy was drafted by the Minnesota Twins in the ninth round in 2014 out of Bradley University (Peoria, Illinois). Murphy earned All-Star accolades twice during his time with the Twins, and was voted a MiLB Gold Glove outfielder in 2017. Murphy reached the Triple-A level with the Diamondbacks in 2019.

Murphy becomes the fourth Goldeye (fifth time overall) in franchise history to earn league Player of the Year honours.

Winnipeg Goldeyes Northern League/American Association Player of the Year Winners

1995 – Terry Lee, Northern League
1996 – Terry Lee, Northern League
1998 – Sean Hearn, Northern League
2017 – Josh Romanski, American Association
2022 – Max Murphy, American Association

The Winnipeg Goldeyes play Game Two of the American Association Division Series against the Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks on Friday, September 9th. First pitch from Newman Outdoor Field is at 6:30 p.m. The Goldeyes lead the best-of-three series 1-0. All the action can be heard locally on CJNU 93.7 FM and worldwide at www.cjnu.ca

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'WHERE THE REAL FUN HAPPENS'

JOSHUA FREY-SAM – WINNIPEG FREE PRESS – WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7th

It appeared business as usual at batting practice, but the Goldeyes had turned the page from the regular season and were finally gearing up for playoff baseball.

September baseball is back in Manitoba's capital for the first time since 2017 when Winnipeg won the North Division en route to their second-straight American Association championship and fourth overall.

The Fish enter this year's fall dance as the third seed in the West Division and will be tasked with winning seven games — three series — over the next few weeks to add another championship flag in the outfield.

"This is where the real, real fun happens," said Reggie Pruitt Jr., Goldeyes outfielder.

"The (regular) season is fun because we're all grinding together and we're all trying to accomplish one goal, win games, everybody's trying to get better. But now, it's not necessarily about the numbers or about the individual, it's just about which team can keep going."

The quest will start Wednesday night at Shaw Park against the second-seed Fargo Moorhead Redhawks, who fell to the defending champion Kansas City Monarchs on Monday, to decide who would capture the West crown.

Due to the league's new playoff format, the Monarchs were awarded the luxury of choosing which team they would face in the first round. They selected the fourth-seed Lincoln Saltdogs over the Goldeyes, likely, in part, to the taxing 13-hour drive it takes to get to Manitoba's capital.

The first-round series will be a best-of-three sprint to see who moves on to play the Monarchs or Saltdogs. Given the Goldeyes will head to Fargo for games two and three, the opener in downtown Winnipeg becomes that much more important.

"It's the best feeling ever going into this, especially with the team we have," Pruitt Jr. said. "Right now, the vibes are good, man. They're right where they're supposed to be for where we want to go, for sure."

The Fish will have their work cut out for them against the Redhawks, who lead the season series 7-5, capturing three of four series. Fargo-Moorhead also outscored Winnipeg 74-65 in those contests.

The series, while it is expected to feature some excellent arm talent on the mound, is even more likely to show a lot of offence. Both teams boasted similar offensive outputs this season, the Goldeyes churning 5.87 runs per game (tied third-most) while the Redhawks carved 5.85 runs per game (fourth-most).

Winnipeg has shown more power than the visitor this season, finishing second in the league with 136 home runs to Fargo-Moorhead's 115. Max Murphy (31) and David Washington (30) largely contributed to the Fish's moon-shots, becoming the first teammates in league history to reach the 30 home run mark.

"Offensively, it boils down to whichever team is going to create the most stressful innings for the starting pitcher... whichever team's gonna get hits with two out and men in scoring position," said Rick Forney, in his 17th season as the Goldeyes skipper.

"Obviously, you're going to have to pitch pretty well and play really good defence. If you're not fundamentally sound, you're not going to get to this point anyway. But sometimes, a mistake here or there on defence and you can get exploited this time of year."

Goldeyes' ace Luis Ramirez will toe the rubber Wednesday night against a team he's already faced three times this season. In 16 innings of work, he's conceded 15 hits, nine earned runs and seven walks.

It's safe to assume he's hoping he saved his best performance for last.

On the other side, the Redhawks will put Kevin McGovern on the mound. McGovern, who helped the Fish win back-to-back titles in '16 and '17, hasn't fared too well against his former club this season.

In three starts, he holds a 7.71 ERA, allowing 14 hits, 12 earned runs and eight walks in 14 innings of work.

"You either have good at-bats or you have bad at-bats... he's not unbeatable," Forney said.

"He lost some games while he pitched for us, he's lost some games while he's pitched for Fargo and we've had (three) pretty good games against him this year."

Max Murphy, who has enjoyed a stellar campaign, capped by a nod to the American Association post-season all-star team, announced on Tuesday, has done some damage to the Redhawks this season, to the tune of 16 hits, 13 RBI and six home runs.

"They have good pitching. But, compared to Kansas City, Fargo likes to throw more balls in the zone, so I think they're a little bit easier to hit against," he said.

"I think we want to try getting in (McGovern's) head a little bit, like he gets pretty rattled up there on the mound when things aren't going how he wants. He doesn't hold runners well, so if we can make some havoc on the bases, and that starts to get in his head once that stuff starts happening."

Other Goldeyes named to the all-star team are shortstop Raul Navarro and first baseman David Washington.

Players, and fans alike, will search for any advantage their team has during the most critical time of the year. Winnipeg will look to capitalize on a potentially tired Fargo-Moorhead team, which is extending a seven-game road trip to end the regular season. After stops in Sioux City and Kansas City, the Redhawks have made the long trip north of the border to face a Goldeyes team that enjoyed a seven-game homestand to end the campaign.

"Yeah, 100 per cent, there's definitely an advantage," Pruitt Jr. said.

"I wouldn't speak for everybody else but I feel like most guys would say that. They're playing in their home park that they're most comfortable, like not having to go out of your routine just because you're at a different place you stick to the routine that you do pretty much every day during the season."

Staying the course is paramount this time of year, Forney preached. It will be up to veterans like Max Murphy (won 2019 AA championship with St. Pauls) and Washington (won 2020 AA championship with Milwaukee) to set the tone in the high-stakes games.

"Having some post-season experience on the roster certainly helps," Forney said about Murphy and Washington. "I mean, believe me, there are guys that get nervous and get a little worked up and put a little more into it than they probably should. But at the end of the day, they need to realize it's the same game that we're playing (tonight) that we played 100 times this year."

"If your team can relax early then you can have some success."

Seven games away from glory, the Goldeyes enter this series as the clear underdog to a team that finished 11 games ahead of them in the standings, and will once again be pups in the second round should they take on the Monarchs, who surged into the post-season.

However, who has the advantage on paper doesn't weigh on Forney, who has three American Association titles to his name.

"I've been doing this a long time and we've been fortunate enough to win around here a few times. There are a few flags flying out there right now that only one of them I know that I was the best team in the league. The other ones we won, I wasn't the best team in the league," he said.

"Anything can happen."

GOLDEYES FEEL LIKE THEY'RE CLICKING HEADING INTO POSTSEASON WATERS **SCOTT BILLECK – WINNIPEG SUN – WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7th**

The Winnipeg Goldeyes are finally back where they belong.

When the American Association's postseason kicks off on Wednesday, the Goldeyes will be back at the plate, ready to lead off their quest to secure their fourth AA championship and fifth league title overall since 1994.

After a four-year hiatus from the independent circuit's promised land, the Fish will face a longtime foe in the Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks in the AA Division Series, with Game 1 of the best-of-three series beginning at Shaw Park (6:35 p.m. local start) before heading south of the border for Games 2 and 3 (if necessary) this weekend.

"It's a great feeling," first-year hitting coach and Goldeyes legend Amos Ramon said Tuesday as the team prepared for Wednesday's playoff opener. "This year was kind of a grind with our guys, the way we started. We kind of started a little slow, and then they worked their way into this thing, played really good baseball the last couple of months, and got ourselves where we wanted to be."

Winnipeg cleaned up in their final two games of the season on Sunday and Monday, winning 8-3 and 10-1, respectively, against the visiting Sioux Falls Canaries to ride into the playoffs with a good feeling in their back pocket.

The Goldeyes scored early and often to close out their 100-game regular season slate, a nice boon for the team, according to Ramon.

"When we score early, it gives us a really good chance, gives our starters a good chance to settle in a little bit," he said.

Those combined 18 runs off of 22 total hits in those games also injected some confidence at the plate.

"That's kind of what you need rolling into the playoffs," Ramon said.

The Goldeyes took down the league crown in 2017, their last taste of the postseason, as they won their second of back-to-back titles. That year, they were the clear favourites heading in, but in 2016, and indeed, 2012, when they snapped an 18-year championship drought, the Fish were labelled as underdogs.

They will fly that same flag heading into the 2022 dance after finishing as the third seed in the West Division with a 53-47 record — their 24th winning season, most of any team in independent baseball. Fargo, who lost a divisional title decider to the first-place Kansas City Monarchs on Monday, were 11 wins up the road on the Goldeyes in second with a 64-36 record.

"I think it's easier to play that way (as an underdog)," Ramon said. "You always say in sports that you have that target on your back. When you're the top team, everyone wants to beat you no matter who you are."

Ramon feels the club hasn't played its best baseball yet.

Despite their two-game winning streak to close out the regular season, the Fish were a floundering 8-16 over their final 24 games. They feel they found a spark as the Labour Day long weekend closed out, one they encountered after the all-star break where they rattled off 12 wins in 16 games, including a stretch where they won nine of 10.

"You can tell things are starting to click again, which is the perfect timing," Ramon said. "And not having that pressure as a player... everybody is counting us out, so what's the worst we can do, go in there and lose? We have nothing to lose and everything to gain. That puts a lot of ease in people's minds as a player."

The Goldeyes will have the two biggest bats in the league in their stable, with right fielder Max Murphy leading the way after pacing the Association with 31 homers and 96 RBIs. Murphy's dinger tally was one more than teammate and Fish first baseman David Washington, who destroyed 30 of his own while driving in 80 runs.

The home-run kings' combined 61 round trips helped the Goldeyes shatter a franchise record for home runs, crossing the finish line with 136. The previous record was 123 set in 1998.

Outside of a couple of additions at the Association's trade deadline last month, including Canadian outfielder Michael Crouse, the Goldeyes haven't changed their complexion all that much. For a team that will be looking to lean on one another going into a tough series with the rival RedHawks, the continuity of the group should serve them well.

"This has been a pretty tight-knit group, so we will be leaning on one another," Ramon said. "We're such a good group together that I think we can do this as a team. When you've had a group like this that's been able to endure the ups and downs of the year as we have, I think it's a lot easier for guys to come together, and we're already together, so it's not going to be a big deal for these guys."

The Goldeyes will find a familiar face against Fargo, with ace Kevin McGovern leading the way for the RedHawks on the mound.

McGovern, a legend at Shaw Park, played parts of five seasons with the Fish, including being part of both the 2016 and 2017 title-winning teams. He's the team's all-time leader in strikeouts and ranks third in wins. It's no surprise that McGovern led the Association this season with 141 strikeouts this year.

At the plate, outfielder John Silvano finished fifth in the league with 23 homers and third in RBIs with 84, while infielder Peter Maris was named the batter of the month for August with 42 hits (including eight homers), 34 RBIs and a healthy .375 batting average.

"They're a really good offensive club, and not to take anything away from their pitchers, but their offence is strong," Ramon said. "We've got to take care of the baseball, don't give them any extra outs. You give a team like that extra outs, it'll be hard to keep them in check."

WITH WINNIPEG TIES, REDHAWKS PITCHER MCGOVERN SAYS PLAYOFF START VS. GOLDEYES WON'T FEEL LIKE 'ROAD GAME' **ERIC PETERSON – INFORUM – WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7th**

FARGO — Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks pitcher Kevin McGovern won't feel like he's on the road Wednesday night when the veteran left-hander takes the mound against the Winnipeg Goldeyes at Shaw Park.

His wife Danielle Doron lives in Winnipeg and his brother-in-law works for the Goldeyes. McGovern is slated to start Game 1 of the best-of-3 American Association Division playoff baseball first-round series for the RedHawks. First pitch is scheduled for 6:35 p.m.

"It's a road game, but it doesn't feel like too much of a road game for me," said McGovern, who also pitched for the Goldeyes for multiple seasons. "It will feel like an extra little visit."

Doron said she expects more than 20 family members at the game with a number of them watching from the suite level. She said her mother is likely going to wear a Goldeyes' McGovern jersey to the game.

"She kind of feels like she is cheering for both," Doiron said.

McGovern and Doiron first met when she worked in sports journalism and media relations for the Goldeyes. She did a sit down interview with McGovern during the 2016 American Association season.

"That was one of the worst interviews ever done," Doiron said. "I joke that Kevin made me nervous and that's why I didn't plug my microphone into the camera, which is why the audio is so terrible."

After the 2016 season ended and Doiron had moved on from her media relations job with the Goldeyes is when their relationship started.

"It just kind of fell into place for us," Doiron said.

She had planned to take a trip to Pittsburgh in late 2016 to watch the Penguins play hockey. Doiron decided to fly into Philadelphia to meet with McGovern and she said that is when the relationship started to take off. They were engaged in the spring of 2018 and then were married April 7, 2019, in Winnipeg.

"Independent baseball changed my life, especially in Winnipeg," McGovern said.

COVID-19 presented some obstacles soon after they were married with McGovern in the Philadelphia area with his family and Doiron in Winnipeg with her family. Doiron said there were about six months they were unable to see each other in person due to the Canada-U.S. border closing during the pandemic.

"It was really tough timing," McGovern said. "It put a definite freeze on our plans and definitely a little more distance between us."

There were multiple canceled flights and altered plans before Doiron was able to fly to Philadelphia and be with McGovern for a few months. Doiron said since both were used to the relationship being long distance, they were able to deal with not being able to see each other in person.

"Our romantic relationship has always been long distance," Doiron said. "Up until the first pandemic year, we haven't lived together for more than five weeks consistently. ... It wasn't anything that new. It was inconvenient that we couldn't fly out for a weekend to see each other."

Doiron is an educational assistant for a high school and also an editor for a weekly newspaper at the University of Winnipeg. She has to do final edits for the paper Wednesday so she's going to have her computer at the game.

Doiron spent nearly two months in Fargo between during her time off from her high school job to follow McGovern's season with the RedHawks.

Doiron's family will have split allegiances Wednesday night with her brother Ed Doiron doing game presentation for the Goldeyes at Shaw Park.

"He always wants Kevin to do well, but he wants the Goldeyes to go far and I understand that and respect that," Danielle said.

Game 2 of the series is slated for 6:30 p.m. Friday at Newman Outdoor Field in Fargo. Game 3 is at 6:30 p.m. Saturday at Newman if necessary. RedHawks bench coach Anthony Renz is thankful that F-M has a pitcher like McGovern to pitch on the road against the rival Goldeyes. The 33-year-old McGovern had a 10-3 record with a 3.69 ERA during the regular season and led the league with 141 strikeouts.

"It's really invaluable," Rend said. "When you've got your No. 1 guy and a veteran guy, it's a little bit of a calming effect for everybody else. ... He basically built his resume through the prime of his career in Winnipeg so it's going to be an environment that he's comfortable in."

McGovern knows Shaw Park is going to have an electric feel.

"It's definitely going to be exciting," McGovern said. "I'm sure they are going to bring out as many fans as I can. I think it's probably the best atmosphere in the league, especially for playoff time."

After McGovern's baseball career is complete, Doiron plans to move to the U.S. to wherever the couple ends up settling down, likely the Philadelphia area where McGovern has family.

"We've had an immigration attorney on retainer for about four years now," Doiron said with a laugh.

AUDIO: PAUL SCHWENDEL INTERVIEW (NOT DODGING THE GOLD)

CHRISTIAN AUMELL – 680 CJOB – TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6th

LINK: <https://globalnews.ca/national/program/cjob-sports-show-with-christian-aumell>

TRIO OF GOLDEYES VOTED POSTSEASON ALL-STARS

STEVE SCHUSTER – WINNIPEG GOLDEYES – TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6th

WINNIPEG, MB – Winnipeg Goldeyes' outfielder **Max Murphy**, shortstop **Raul Navarro**, and first baseman **David Washington** have been voted to the American Association's 2022 Postseason All-Star Team.

The Postseason All-Stars (full team below) were voted on by the league's field managers, team executives, and media representatives.

Murphy started all 100 games in right field, and hit .308 while leading the American Association in both home runs (31) and RBI (97). The 31 home runs tied the Goldeyes' single-season record set by Kyle Martin in 2021, and rank tied for second in American Association history. The Robbinsdale, Minnesota native also tied for the league lead with 12 outfield assists, which were the most by a Goldeyes' outfielder since Chris Kokinda in 1999. Murphy ranked sixth among American Association position players with 3.7 wins above replacement.

Murphy is in his second season with the Goldeyes, and hit .307 with 13 home runs and 71 RBI in 99 games in 2021. The 29-year-old outfielder was drafted by the Minnesota Twins in the ninth round in 2014 out of Bradley University, and reached the Triple-A level with the Arizona Diamondbacks' organization in 2019. Murphy previously played three seasons in the American Association with the St. Paul Saints where he was an All-Star in 2019 before having his contract purchased by Arizona.

Navarro finished the season sixth in the American Association with a .335 batting average in 91 games played. The Los Llanos, Dominican Republic native scored 75 runs with 24 doubles, four triples, six home runs, 51 RBI, and 18 stolen bases in 21 attempts. Navarro ran off a career-high 24-game hitting streak from June 29th-August 4th, which was the longest in the American Association this season. Navarro was twice named American Association Batter of the Week, and finished 13th among position players with 3.4 wins above replacement.

Navarro hit .310 for the Goldeyes in 88 games last season with 48 runs scored, 24 doubles, 45 RBI, and 20 stolen bases. The 30-year-old originally signed with the Diamondbacks as an international free agent in 2009, and reached the Triple-A level in 2015. Navarro earned MVP honours in the independent Pacific Association in 2019 after hitting .373 with 66 runs, 41 RBI, and 31 stolen bases in 62 games for the San Rafael Pacifics.

Washington hit .273 with 30 home runs and 80 RBI in 99 games. The San Diego, California native finished second in the American Association in home runs and tied for eighth in RBI. Washington was named American Association Batter of the Week for August 8th-14th. Washington achieved two significant career milestones during the season, hitting his 200th career home run on July 21st at Chicago, and notching his 1,000th career base hit in the second game of a double header on August 27th at Fargo-Moorhead. A left-handed hitter throughout his career, Washington began switch-hitting in late June, and finished the season with a .242 average, three home runs, and a .435 slugging percentage in 62 at bats from the right side of the plate.

Washington was drafted by the St. Louis Cardinals in the 15th round out of University City High School in San Diego. The 31-year-old reached the Major Leagues in 2017 with the Baltimore Orioles, and is now in his 14th season of professional baseball. Including this season, Washington has helped his team reach the playoffs in five consecutive years, including championships with the Atlantic League's Long Island Ducks in 2019 and American Association's Milwaukee Milkmen in 2020.

2022 American Association Postseason All-Stars

C – Ryan Lidge, Chicago

1B – **David Washington, Winnipeg**

2B – Grant Kay, Chicago

3B – Leobaldo Pina, Fargo-Moorhead

SS – **Raul Navarro, Winnipeg**

OF – **Max Murphy, Winnipeg**

OF – Jimmy Kerrigan, Kane County

OF – Zach Nehrir, Cleburne

DH – Drew Ward, Fargo-Moorhead
UTIL – Bryan Torres, Milwaukee
SP – Matt Hall, Kansas City
RP – Alex DuBord, Fargo-Moorhead

The Goldeyes host Game One of the American Association Division Series Wednesday night against the Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks. First pitch is scheduled for 6:35 p.m.

For information on Winnipeg Goldeyes' postseason tickets, as well as 2023 season tickets, individual tickets, group outings, and 10-game mini packs, visit the Goldeyes' official website at www.goldeyes.com

GOLDEYES DRAW REDHAWKS IN FIRST ROUND OF PLAYOFFS

STEVE SCHUSTER – WINNIPEG GOLDEYES – MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 5th

WINNIPEG, MB – The Winnipeg Goldeyes will face the Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks in the American Association Division Series beginning Wednesday, September 7th at Shaw Park.

Game One of the best-of-three series is scheduled for 6:35 p.m.

Game Two and the "if necessary" Game Three are both scheduled for 6:30 p.m. at Newman Outdoor Field in Fargo, North Dakota on Friday and Saturday respectively.

The Goldeyes finished the regular season 53-47, and in third place in the American Association West Division. By virtue of clinching the West Division on Monday, the Kansas City Monarchs selected the fourth-place Lincoln Saltdogs as their first round opponent, setting up the series between the Goldeyes and the RedHawks.

This marks the 11th postseason meeting all-time between Winnipeg and Fargo-Moorhead, and the first since the 2012 American Association Division Series.

The winners of the Winnipeg/Fargo-Moorhead series and the Kansas City/Lincoln series meet in the best-of-three West Division Championship Series beginning Monday, September 12th.

The Chicago Dogs clinched the East Division on Sunday, and selected the Milwaukee Milkmen as their Division Series opponent. The Kane County Cougars and Cleburne Railroaders square off in the remaining series in the East.

The winners of the two Division Championship Series meet in the best-of-five Miles Wolff Cup Finals, beginning Saturday, September 17th.

2022 American Association Division Series vs. Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks

Game 1 – Wednesday, September 7th – Shaw Park, 6:35 p.m.

Game 2 – Friday, September 9th – Newman Outdoor Field, 6:30 p.m.

Game 3 – Saturday, September 10th – Newman Outdoor Field, 6:30 p.m. (if necessary)

Winnipeg Goldeyes vs. Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks Playoff History

1996 – Northern League West Division Championship Series (RedHawks won 2-1)
1997 – Northern League West Division Championship Series (Goldeyes won 3-2)
1998 – Northern League West Division Championship Series (RedHawks won 3-1)
1999 – Northern League Central Conference Championship Series (Goldeyes won 3-0)
2000 – Northern League West Division Championship Series (RedHawks won 3-0)
2001 – Northern League West Division Championship Series (Goldeyes won 3-2)
2003 – Northern League Championship Series (RedHawks won 3-1)
2006 – Northern League North Division Championship Series (RedHawks won 3-2)
2009 – Northern League Division Series (RedHawks won 3-2)
2012 – American Association Division Series (Goldeyes won 3-0)
2022 – American Association Division Series

For information on Winnipeg Goldeyes' postseason tickets, as well as 2023 season tickets, individual tickets, group outings, and 10-game mini packs, visit the Goldeyes' official website at www.goldeyes.com
