

MEN'S BASEBALL

# Dukes' Rich Bordas still has a passion for hitting

By JORDAN OSTERMAN  
josterman@northfieldnews.com



Rich Bordas takes a two-strike swing Thursday against Elko. (Jordan Osterman/Northfield News)

Rich Bordas likes to hit. Scratch that. Rich Bordas *really* likes to hit.

If you need proof, ask Dundas Dukes manager Charlie Ruud. He'll tell you the story of the time Bordas was in Florida on business and scheduled a flight home on a Sunday morning to play in Dundas' afternoon game, had the eventual game-winning hit, then flew back down to Florida on Sunday night.

Then he'll tell you that happened last weekend.

"He's just a legend," teammate Mike Ludwig said. "He rolls out of the car and hits about .380. Rich is incredible."

At 46 years young, Bordas is the Dukes' most senior hitter. But it's not his age that gains him the respect of his teammates. It's the fact that, even though he's been playing since well before some of those teammates were alive, this guy can just plain hit.

"Some guys are just hitters," Ruud said. "And he's one of them."

## Hitting

When it comes to baseball, the only thing Bordas might like as much as hitting is talking about hitting.

"I love to talk hitting with anybody," he said.

At the plate, he's more apt to let his bat do the talking, working at the plate with a measured approach that has been honed over decades of at-bats.

While his feel for the strike zone has grown over that time, the speed of his hands to the ball have remained seemingly timeless, driving the knob of the bat inside and hammering the barrel down through contact.

"The more swings the better," Bordas said. "It's a lot of muscle memory."

Since he started swinging when he was

5 years old, Bordas' muscles have plenty of memory to draw from. Having been on the Minnesota town ball circuit since 1982, and with the Dukes since its state championship in 1999, the chatter of opposing players often gives away that they know exactly what Bordas' muscles have been apt to do over the years: lay down a bunt.

Thursday, the call came from a player in the Elko dugout to his third baseman to watch for a bunt from the lefty, a craft of havoc Bordas has been reeking on opposing fielders for years. This season is the first Bordas hasn't had a bunt hit, perhaps the only noticeable sign of the lost step that creeps up on any ball-player.

"There are times, being as good of a bunter as he is, that it's a little different than it used to be for him at the plate," Ludwig said.

What isn't different is Bordas' knack for putting barrel on ball and working an at-bat, whether ahead in the count or fighting

from behind.

"He has a good approach up there, he puts the ball in play with two strikes, which just means he's a really tough out," Ludwig said. "That gets lost a little bit in the game today."

## A quality college education

After playing at Apple Valley High School, Bordas headed to Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Okla., to play college ball. It was there, under the tutelage of former University of Southern California home run king Pat Harrison, that Bordas said he truly learned how to be a hitter.

"For hours and hours we as a team would talk about hitting. Everyone would be up there in front of the mirror and practice working on different things," he said. "How do you make it the right swing? How do you adjust? Baseball's all about adjustments."

It's the ability to make adjustments that has marked Bordas' 13 years with the Dukes

as much as anything.

"You find out in baseball the longer you play, the game stays the same but you change, and you have to continue to find a way to get the ball in play," Ludwig said.

Bordas continues to do just that, and in a game obsessed with numbers he has managed to make the number 46 seem meaningless.

"Once you think you can't any more you can't. You have to think that you can, and there's a way," he said. "You have to think when you're up there that you can hit this guy, that you know how to hit this guy, and focus on what it takes to actually hit him. That's what I do."

That approach, and the years of steady results that have come out of it, have helped Bordas earn a distinctive place in both Dukes history and in the eyes of his teammates.

"It's good for the entire team just to talk to him about hitting, and to see a guy play the game with as much passion as he does," Ludwig said. "It's a pleasure to have him around."

While there's no foreseeable point in the coming future Bordas doesn't plan on being around, he said he doesn't picture himself staying with the game to coach. He does work with his nephews on hitting, but he's "more of a player than a coach," he said.

For anyone who learns by seeing as much as learning, that's a positive thing. They can still pick Bordas' brain all day long about hitting, and after that's done watch him dig out space for his feet in the box for another at-bat and show the swing that has carried him through 41 years of playing.

Crediting "ok living" ("I don't do yoga or anything like that," Bordas said), there's no reason to think teammates won't have plenty more of those at-bats to watch. After all, it is baseball, and 47 is just another number.

Reach Sports Editor Jordan Osterman at 645-1111, or follow him on Twitter.com @NFNJordan.

# Baseball: River Bandits jump out to first-inning lead



Cameron Gorr of the Sand Gnats reaches up to haul in a fly ball during Wednesday's league championship game against the River Bandits. (Jordan Osterman/Northfield News)

From Page 1B

"We really kept the errors down tonight," Prestemon said.

Smith's run in the sixth inning gave Bielenberg more cushion than he would need and rounded out the River Bandit's total before they closed out the seventh and started the championship celebration. Players took turns posing with the championship trophy at home plate, something Nielson has been waiting for since kindergarten.

"Finally," he said. "I won."

The River Bandits jumped out front in the first inning after Nielsen reached on a fielder's choice, stole second and came in to score on two passed balls. That lead only lasted until the top of the first, when Cooper Harron's leadoff double turned into the game-tying run.

It would be the last time the Sand Gnats weren't behind as the River Bandits rallied with two outs in the second inning. After Taylor Haagenson scored with steals and

a passed ball, Bielenberg started the rally with a walk. That led to a Nielsen RBI double, a Will Kalisch walk, a Smith RBI single and a Luther Prestemon single that ended Dylan Olson's day on the mound for the Sand Gnats.

Cole Olson took over the on the mound, getting out of the inning and keeping the River Bandits in check until the Sand Gnats answered in the top of the fourth. There, Cole started the inning with a double and later came in on Brady Malecha's sacrifice fly, and Harron's single kept the rally going with two outs. A walk and two passed balls set up Josh Chlan's RBI triple, which cut the lead to 6-4.

Bielenberg's double and Smith's RBI single in the bottom of the fourth highlighted a two-run inning that gave the River Bandits all the space it would need.

"We've worked hard all year on our hitting and were one of the best hitting and most aggressive teams on the base paths and that paid off tonight against a very good team," said Smith, who noted that the teams split their season series 2-2 with one tie. "It was a great end to an enjoyable season."

Reach Sports Editor Jordan Osterman at 645-1111, or follow him on Twitter.com @NFNJordan.

## Living Green.

Features, tips and updates on local sustainability efforts. Published the fourth Wednesday each month.

Northfield News  
NorthfieldNews.com



## Relish what's coming next month!

(Look for it right here August 4th.)



- Turkey Sliders - Perfect Kid-sized Food
- Kid-friendly Spaghetti and Meatballs
- Peach Cobbler Kids Can Make
- Cookies For Breakfast? You Bet!

PLUS

The New Relish for MomsBack-to-School Tablet Edition for iPad! [relish.com/mobile](http://relish.com/mobile)



relish  
CELEBRATING AMERICA'S LOVE OF FOOD

Northfield News  
115 5th Street W, Northfield | 507.645.5615

## Already a subscriber?



Enroll in the **Northfield News EZ Pay Plan** and your subscription will automatically be deducted each month out of your checking account or credit card. Receive a \$15 Target Gift Card when you join. Call today as this is a Limited Time offer.

**507-645-1101**



saves you time & effort and you will receive a \$15 Gift Card when you join.



Flip me to



**Northfield News**

[NorthfieldNews.com](http://NorthfieldNews.com)

115 5th Street W, Northfield • 645-1101

Stop in today with your credit card or bank information or send in this coupon and we will contact you via phone.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

\*Limited quantity of gift cards available.

## See How Much



You Could Have Saved Last Week!

in the

**Northfield News**

**\$68.95**

Start saving today!!

Call 645-1101

Save even more with

**EZ Pay**

and get our

lowest rate.

Subscription Form

Yes, Please start my subscription to the Northfield News.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, please sign me up for Easy Pay, so I receive the best rate. Check the appropriate box.

**In Rice County:**

24 Weeks - \$36.00

52 Weeks - \$78.00

**2 EZ Pay Options to Choose From**

1.  Please have the monthly amount applied to my credit card checked.

VISA  M/C  Discover

Credit Card No. \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_

2.  Please take the amount out of my checking/savings account. I am enclosing a voided check for you to get the information from.

I authorize the Northfield News to charge my account or credit card each month for the plan checked above, until I notify the Northfield News.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail or bring this order form to:

the Northfield News,

115 West Fifth Street,

Northfield, MN 55057.

For faster service or for more information, please call 507-645-1101.

**Northfield News**

115 West Fifth Street

Northfield, MN 55057

507-645-5615

[www.northfieldnews.com](http://www.northfieldnews.com)