

Sweet victory for the Saints and Cardinals

What Oriole Park at Camden Yards has lost to greed and lackluster performance, Ripken Stadium, Aberdeen, has made up for in supporting youth baseball in a fan-oriented setting.

Ripken Stadium was, again, home to the MIAA A and B Conference Baseball Championships and fans were not disappointed.

Under clear, blue skies, the American flag stood tall from center field, with a west wind blowing out toward left. It was baseball at its best, with down to the wire action, team hustle and the obvious sense that the 2,000 fans present loved their teams.

The afternoon opened with B Conference action as 18-5 St. Mary's, Annapolis, faced the Boys' Latin, Baltimore, Lakers in the first of the day's double-header.

The Saints, coached by Dave Lanham, jumped out to a 3-0 lead in the top of the first inning with a lead-off walk issued to shortstop Steven Knopf, as twin brother and second baseman Ryan followed with gap double into centerfield. Starting pitcher Austin Poretz then singled in two runs, stole second and scored on first baseman Mike Tarlaian's sharply hit single past the Lakers' shortstop.

By the third inning, the Saints gathered three more runs on a lead-off single by Ryan Knopf, a gap triple to the centerfield wall by Poretz who was then awarded home on an out-of-play overthrow. Adding to the run total was designated hitter Dwight Wilcox's single followed by leftfielder John Stewart's single, and the beat goes on as the Saints tallied their six runs in three early innings of play.

The Lakers crept back, Poretz tired and Korbin Sargent gave the relief performance of his season, yielding only two hits in three innings. The Saints hung on for an 8-7 win and their second championship title in four years.

After an hour delay due to a field maintenance issue, the Calvert Hall College High

School, Towson, Cardinals got the job done against Mount St. Joseph (17-15) in a 4-0 late inning surge behind the stellar pitching performance of junior Mike Dillon (9-0). The 2007 Cardinals have gone undefeated at 33-0, set another state record, and have now extended their whirlwind of wins over two seasons to 75-0. In addition, The Hall has recorded its third consecutive MIAA A Conference title and according to MIAA and MSA officials, have secured 15 championship titles in the last 31 years.

The Cardinals scored four runs on eight hits while the Gaels, who held the Cards scoreless through five innings, delivered only three hits on the day. The Gaels' Danny Druzgala was the starting pitcher and mixed his pitches well before tiring. Senior cleanup man Jeff Guthridge singled in senior Reid Chenworth, who reached on a walk and then stole second on a close safe-call.

The Cards' second run came on a smoking drive over the left field wall by senior John Collingsworth for a 2-0 lead. The Gaels became unglued in the bottom of the sixth as reliever Tommy Miller faced only two batters as head coach Dave Norton marched to the mound again, this time calling for third baseman Brandon White. The Cards' Patrick Blair singled as did Chenworth; both scored.