

EATON

No need for a parade or even any excused absences from school.

A mere mention in this morning's church sermons will do just fine.

After all, Danley likes to keep things in perspective.

It wasn't long ago that Danley began to worry as much about when and if the Reds would ever win a title as he did the telephone light pole that was a fixture in right field and the track that wound its way through the team's outfield.

Now, Danley's biggest concern is where to put the new hardware in the school trophy case, hardly more than a line drive from the team's new field, which possesses more glitz and glitter than any other structure in Eaton.

After three decades of guiding the Reds way past mediocrity and into the limelight, Danley doesn't waste one second thinking about retiring.

"Why? If I retired, I'd probably go get at least a part-time job coaching baseball somewhere. I can't think of anything else I'd rather be doing on a Saturday afternoon," he said.

The youth of Eaton wouldn't want him doing anything else.

Danley's next chore will come Monday morning, when

he'll take on the shuffling and dusting chores to find a home for the 2002 state title trophy in an already crowded trophy case.

In typical Danley fashion, he'll do the task minus any unnecessary fanfare.

Bet the ranch — and there are a few of them in the shadows of Eaton High School — that Danley won't make much to-do about the latest Eaton championship. His standard answer of "credit the kids and the assistant coaches," is becoming about as redundant as the Reds playing for the state championship.

Well, this time, the credit can start with Danley, whose strategy never seems to amaze the opponent.

Overmatched and slightly inexperienced, this year's version of Eaton state finalists played perfectly to their head coach's tune, playing within themselves and following orders.

If any program takes on the personality of its head coach, it's the Eaton baseball program. Business first, and then a controlled celebration.

The first order of the day was for no sleeping on the team bus, en route to Denver just as the sun was coming up.

Next, act like you've been here before, which is no problem for the Reds, who were

making their ninth straight appearance in the Class 3A Final Four.

After that, Danley asked his team to rely on strong pitching, contact hitting and solid defense.

Nope, the architect of more victories by any head coach in Colorado history isn't a genius. Doesn't profess to be either.

The end result was another Saturday afternoon victory for the Reds. This one just happened to be for the state title, which is reason enough to dog-pile on the pitcher's mound before returning to an orderly fashion and accepting the team trophy.

Then it was back on the bus, a team lunch at Zang's — not exactly a Diner's Card entry — and back to the stomping grounds long before sundown.

It's becoming a routine May weekend for the Eaton baseball team.

There was never a thought about staying in the city, even if to watch the larger-enrollment schools battle for the state title trophy like Eaton's, which is starting to blend in with the others.

The rest of the day didn't call for anything special other than to enjoy some peace of mind, knowing that the road to the Class 3A baseball championship still runs through Eaton.

It would have been to nobody's surprise — even Danley's — if some of the Reds had gathered for a sandlot game at the Eaton park late Saturday afternoon.

After all, there's the summer American Legion program to start thinking about.