



Coach Sparkman holding the 2004 State Championship Trophy; his 7th such trophy

COACH SPARKMAN WINS #300

**Victories on Saturday
Improve Coach Randy
Sparkman's Varsity
Record at Eaton to
301 – 39 – 1
for Unimaginable Win
Percentage of .884**

(Reds are winning 18 of every 20 games played)

Times were different before Randy Sparkman joined the Eaton Reds' coaching staff. No one wore State Championship rings, the Reds played on an all-dirt infield that was arguably the worst in the state, Eaton had just come off a season in which they didn't win the league championship, and you could buy a gallon of milk for 42 cents. OK, the last item may be a slight exaggeration, but other than having a President Bush in office, things were definitely different when Coach Sparkman joined the helm in 1992.

On Saturday, Coach Randy Sparkman picked up his 300th and 301st wins against Valley.

Starting as an assistant coach for the Reds in 1992, Coach Sparkman has amazingly lost fewer than 40 games (that's less than 3 losses per 25-game season) while racking up an unheard of win percentage of .884 in 14+ seasons. In addition to coaching first base for the Varsity team, Coach Sparkman is also the head coach of the Junior Varsity team, always preparing tomorrow's players for their moment in the spotlight. While less-heralded in the newspapers than the Varsity ballclub, the Junior Varsity team serves as more than just a farm club, the JV team wins at a very similar clip as their Varsity brethren. The team was 13-2 in 2005, with wins over numerous Class 4A & 5A teams.

Right out of the gates in 1992, Coach Sparkman bore witness to more than 10% of the losses the Reds would endure throughout the next 14 years, with 4 losses to start the season, albeit against Class 4A and 5A opponents. In fact, Coach Sparkman would have to travel 210 miles to nearly the Kansas state line to pick up his first victory at Burlington in 1992. Times must have seemed tough.

That would change quickly however, as the Reds won 14 of their next 15 games to head to the State Tournament. In his 2nd season, the Reds nearly pulled off the elusive State Championship by winning a rain-delayed, 11-inning, 7-hour Semifinal Game, but fell short in the Title game that ended after 1:00 am the next morning. But during just his 3rd season with the Reds, the 1994 team won their first State Championship. They did it again in 1995, and had a perfect season in 1998 to give Coach Sparkman 3 State Championship Rings within his first 7 years of coaching at Eaton.

Many great coaches go years, if not decades, without even having a single State Championship Game appearance; but for Coach Sparkman and the Reds, things were just heating up. The 1999 team would go on to extend their win streak to 45 games, which still stands as the state record at any level. Coach Sparkman would take the first base coaches box at the State Championship Game in 2000, and would play a pivotal role in the Reds' epic 3-2, 15-inning State Championship Game victory in 2001 over a pitcher currently on the Padres' 40-man roster.

A feat such as the 2001 State Championship can never be eclipsed, though in 2002 the Reds gave their best shot at doing just that, as they entered the State Championship Game in an unfamiliar role, that of the heavy underdog to senior-laden Denver Christian. Unfazed, the Reds simply went out and quickly put the game out of reach as they won 12-0 in the mercy-rule-shortened, 5-inning game. In 2003, the Reds scored 17 runs en route to their 3rd straight State Championship. Coach Sparkman then picked up his 7th State Championship Ring in 2004 as the Reds defeated La Junta for a fourth consecutive Title.

Saturday's double-header sweep of Valley increased Coach Sparkman's win total to 301 versus a mere 39 losses and one tie. Coach Sparkman currently has a win percentage of .884, which is beyond spectacular and more in the realm of the unfathomable. In fact, a \$300 reward has been offered to the first person that can find a baseball coach anywhere in the nation with as high of a win percentage over 300+ games; the reward is highly expected to go unclaimed.

In between all of these championships and the pressure-filled, oft-heroic moments, have been many unforgettable laughs and spectacles that are likely exclusive to that of the Reds' dugout. Coach Sparkman, like all on the coaching staff, has endured the ol' hot foot, bucket of firecrackers, and many other hilarious moments not best described in writing.

Coach Sparkman, now 37, was a standout athlete at Hotchkiss High School. He was a 4-year starter at first base and pitcher, and starred at football and basketball as well. As a senior, Coach Sparkman was coached by his father, Gary. Following high school graduation, Coach Sparkman went to UNC and would leave school after final exams to help his dad coach the team into the postseason. Following a very successful coaching career at Hotchkiss, Gary Sparkman moved to Class 2A Paonia to coach and won three (3) state championships there.

Due to a rain delay that postponed the Class 2A State Championship to the day following Eaton's Class 3A State Championship Game, Coach Randy Sparkman was able to watch his father win his first title in 1996, which gave both coaches a state championship under their belt. There are very few State Championship father-and-son coaches in Colorado state history, and possibly none that share the feat of having both won a state championship in the same year, let alone on the same day, which occurred in 1998 as both Coach Sparkmans added one more ring to the collection. One of the many highlights of Coach Randy Sparkman's career occurred in 1999, when Paonia became a Class 3A team and met Eaton in the Regional Championship at Butch Butler Field in Greeley. The two Coach Sparkmans met at home plate to shake hands and exchange lineup cards before the game, and went on to be a part of a classic 4-3 thriller, which came out in Eaton's favor.

Coach Sparkman's success on the baseball field is evident throughout all other aspects of his life as well. Coach Sparkman married his high school sweetheart, Karin, in 1992, and they have two daughters, Kendall (age 8) and Karlee (her 5th birthday is next weekend). The Sparkmans live in Greeley, as does Coach Sparkman's mother, Zona. Karin is an avid baseball fan and supporter of her husband's success both on and off the field. Coach Sparkman teaches at Mountain View Academy in Greeley, and recently became Captain of the Milliken Fire Department.

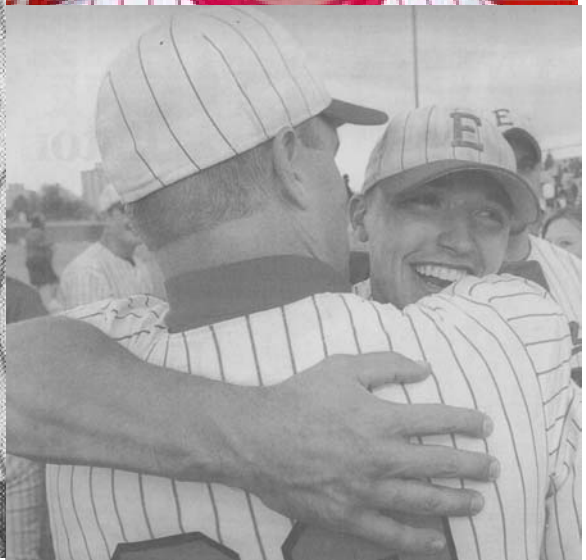
Through his coaching and teaching, Coach Sparkman has prepared hundreds of kids for success in the present and the future through the lessons learned both on and off the baseball field. Truly a player's coach, Coach Sparkman has earned the respect and admiration of Reds' players from the time they first step onto the field, through many years following their graduation. From one of the many former Reds' players that wish to express their sincere respect and congratulations on this amazing achievement:

Coach Sparkman, Congratulations on Win #300, may it be followed by many more.

4/1/06

COACH SPARKMAN'S MILESTONE VICTORIES

Win #	Date	Opponent	Score	Site
1	April 4, 1992	Burlington	16-5	Burlington
50	May 13, 1994	Hotchkiss	9-1	Runyon Field in Pueblo
53	May 21, 1994	Olathe	3-1	State Championship – All-City
75	May 19, 1995	Salida	2-1	State Championship – Regis Field
100	Mar. 29, 1997	Wray	8-5	Eaton
136	May 16, 1998	Lamar	3-1	State Championship – All-City
150	April 26, 1999	Highland	16-0	Eaton
200	May 12, 2001	Kent Denver	9-3	Butch Butler in Greeley
203	May 19, 2001	La Junta	3-2	State Championship – All-City
225	May 18, 2002	Denver Christian	12-0	State Championship – All-City
250	May 17, 2003	La Junta	17-10	State Championship – All-Star Park
272	May 22, 2004	La Junta	8-5	State Championship – Runyon Field
300	April 1, 2006	Valley	6-1	Eaton



Photos above (clockwise from top): Coach Sparkman (2nd from left) one of the first to the pile-up after '95 State Championship; press photo; congratulating players after state-record 15-inning State Championship win in '01; congratulating Coach Danley after first State Championship in '94.