

1998 Class 3A State Championship

CENTER GROVE BECOMES FIRST THREE-TIME STATE CHAMPION

Center Grove exploded for three runs in the fifth inning to defeat Portage, 4-2, and win the IHSAA Class 3A Softball state championship June 21 at Cherry Tree Softball Complex in Carmel.

With the victory, Center Grove (35-2) earned its third state championship in softball, the first school to accomplish the feat. The Trojans also won it all in 1986 and 1995. Merrillville, the 1997 state champion, has two titles to its credit.

Center Grove took a 1-0 lead in the second inning when Juliet Nickelson, who was hit by a pitch and advanced to second on a sacrifice, scored on a single to right field by Sarah Robards.

Portage, which finished 31-4 in its first trip to the state finals since 1986, countered in its next at-bat and grabbed a 2-1 lead. Cheryl Buegler opened the inning with an infield hit and later scored on a single to centerfield by Kelly Rich. Rich worked her way around the bases and tallied a run on Kelly Buhman's base hit to centerfield.

Center Grove's three-run fifth inning began with Sarah Robards' lead-off single. Julie Aliff replaced her as a pinch runner and advanced to third on Sarah Humphrey's one-out single into rightfield. After a pop-up to the pitcher, Aliff and Humphrey scored on Amanda Allanson's single down the rightfield line. Adrienne Hedrick added a single up the middle, which scored Allanson from second base, and gave the Trojans a 4-2 lead.

The IHSAA Executive Committee selected Portage leftfielder Kelly Rich as the recipient of the Mental Attitude Award in Class 3A Softball. Rich, a four-year letterman in softball and basketball, ranks in the top 15 percent of her senior class and is a member of the National Honor Society. She intends to enroll at Purdue University-Calumet and pursue a degree in teaching and coaching. Farm Bureau Insurance, the IHSAA corporate partner, presented a \$1,000 scholarship to Portage High School in Rich's name.

Portage (2)

	AB	R	H	RBI
Michele Pickering, c	3	0	0	0
Cheryl Buegler, 3b	3	1	1	0
Katie Kawiecki, ss	3	0	0	0

Wendy Cannon, p	3	0	1	0
Kelly Rich, lf	3	1	1	1
Jamie Lewis, 1b	3	0	0	0
Kelly Buhman, dh	2	0	1	0
Lauren Benson, pr	0	0	0	0
Corrine Munoz, cf/rf	0	0	0	0
Shawna Carter, 2b	3	0	1	1
Kristin King, rf	3	0	1	0
Christy Nystrom, cf	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	26	2	6	2

Center Grove (4)

	AB	R	H	RBI
Sarah Humphrey,ss	4	1	1	0
Jill Paxson, rf	3	0	0	0
Amanda Allanson, lf	3	1	2	2
Adrienne Hedrick, c	3	0	1	1
Katie Davis, pr	0	0	0	0
Julie Nickelson, dh	2	1	0	0
Nikki Smith, p	0	0	0	0
Chrissy Boudi, 3b	3	0	1	0
Gabe Moran, 2b	2	0	1	0
Sarah Robards, 1b	3	0	3	1
Julie Aliff, pr	0	1	0	0
Tricia Moore, cf	2	0	0	0
TOTALS	25	4	9	4

Portage	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	--	2	6	1
Center Grove	0	1	0	0	3	0	x	--	4	9	1

E ♦ Humphrey, Munoz. 3B ♦ Boudi. HBP ♦ Nickelson, Pickering. DP ♦ Center Grove (Smith-Humphrey-Robards). LOB ♦ Portage 7, Center Grove 6. SAC -- Kawiecki, Moran, Moore. Umpires ♦ Danny E. Cook (Home Plate), Harold Howell (First Base), Don Fisher (Third Base), Ron Lowe (Left Field), Tony Fornuto (Right Field). Time of Game ♦ 1:30. Attendance ♦ 2,433 (three-game attendance).

Pitching Summary

	IP	R	ER	H	BB	SO
Cannon, L (27-4)	7	4	4	9	0	6
Smith, W (19-1)	7	2	2	6	2	4