

## **Disputed umpire's call ends with arrest for Grand Forks father**

A Grand Forks father who was arrested at a Babe Ruth League tournament in Wahpeton, N.D., said Wednesday he regrets his behavior, but that the incident has been overblown.

"It was just a bad call, and I blew up," 44-year-old Michael Lizotte said. "Was I wrong? Yup, I agree with that."

Wahpeton Police Chief Scott Thorsteinson said Lizotte was ejected from the stands for yelling obscenities at the umpires during a Sunday evening game. Lizotte said he was not ejected, but left on his own.

An off-duty deputy who was volunteering at the tournament told Lizotte to leave the area or risk being arrested, Thorsteinson said.

Thorsteinson said that after the game, as the umpires were walking to the changing room, Lizotte got in the face of one umpire and began yelling. The two were separated, and the deputy escorted Lizotte to the parking lot, the chief said. Lizotte said he did not have to be separated from the ump.

"All I said to them was, 'That was the worst f-ing call I've ever seen. That was horrible.' "

Lizotte said the deputy, who was wearing plainclothes, identified himself as an officer, but did not show Lizotte law enforcement identification until after the deputy called the police.

"He was arguing with me, and I was arguing back," Lizotte said. "I thought he was a parent."

Lizotte said he would have acted differently if he had earlier seen proof that the man was a deputy.

When police responded, Lizotte said, he asked the officers to arrest him discretely so not to embarrass his son. Instead, he said, he was placed in a police vehicle where others could easily see him as they left the game.

"That's when my son seen me and started crying," Lizotte said.

Lizotte posted \$500 bond on a disorderly conduct charge and was released from the Richland County jail the same day.

Lizotte said he tried to apologize to the officers the next day and that he

plans to write a letter of apology to the umpires.

Thorsteinson said it was an isolated incident and that the other supporters of the Grand Forks team were well-behaved.

The Grand Forks team made up of 14-year-olds came in second in the tournament, losing to the Fargo Americans, said Bill Palmiscno, a board member of the Forks Area Youth Baseball Association.

Palmiscno, who's also the superintendent of recreation for the Grand Forks Parks District, said unruly parents are occasionally ejected from youth sporting events in Grand Forks, but he hasn't heard of any being arrested here.

Disorderly conduct is a Class B misdemeanor that carries a maximum penalty of a \$1,000 fine and 30 days in jail.