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Friday Jul 27

Hillsborough comes out swinging

10-and-11-year-old stars score 8; four pitchers blank McKinleyville

By John Reid / Daily News Staff Writer

SAN JOSE - The secret about the Hillsborough Little League 10-and-11-year-old All-Stars is that they can beat you in so many ways. And if you give them something for free, they know how to use it to their advantage.

McKinleyville witnessed that in Thursday night's 8-0 defeat to Hillsborough in the first round of the Division II Little League All-Star Tournament at Branham Hills Little League in San Jose.

Hillsborough plays Saratoga, which drew a bye, today at 5:30 p.m. as the six-team tournament continues. In a topsy-turvy game on the adjacent field, Benicia held off Woodcreek-Roseville 12-11 in seven innings, despite four home runs by Woodcreek. Benicia plays River Park-Fresno today at 5:30 p.m. in the other Division II game.

A two-out error by McKinleyville led to five unearned runs in the bottom of the third for Hillsborough, which tallied six runs total in the inning to break the game open. The run production was crucial because McKinleyville had a hard thrower on the mound in Sam Schmidt, who was effective when he was throwing strikes. Schmidt battled wildness at times, uncorking six wild pitches in 3 2/3 innings. Four passed balls didn't help his cause.

"We knew McKinleyville had a very hard thrower," Hillsborough manager Jeff Cozad said. "He is a very high-quality pitcher, but we face hard throwers during the league. We did a good job of putting the ball in play and didn't strike out much."

"Schmidt pitched real well," McKinleyville manager Joe Nickols said. "We had that bad inning where we made two errors and they scored some runs. Hillsborough is a very disciplined hitting team. They didn't chase many bad pitches."

Grant Goodman's RBI single in the first inning plated Henry Caruso, who led off with a single. After stranding three runners in the second, Hillsborough took control of the game in the third. Frankie Ferrari ripped a one-out single to left field, then went to second on a wild pitch and to third on a passed ball. Will Reilly's ground out following a walk to Andrew Segre scored Ferrari. A fielding error opened the gates for Hillsborough.

Gordon Barrows singled off Schmidt's glove for one run. Caruso drove the first pitch into the right-center field gap for two more runs.

Charlie Boyd doubled in the fourth inning and was replaced by pinch-runner Segre, who moved up a base on a passed ball. Segre scored when the throw came to the plate on a squibber in the infield by Brenden Barrows with Segre sliding safely ahead of the tag.

Cozad worked his pitching staff around the pitch-count limits to perfection. Goodman started and pitched 2 1/3 innings of no-hit ball, while striking out six of a possible seven outs.

"I was real nervous the first couple of batters," Goodman said. "I think this was a good game for us to get our nerves out of the way."

Ferrari, Brenden Barrows and Brock Cozad finished up on the mound for Hillsborough. None of them threw more than 20 pitches, so they will be available today. Goodman, who threw between 21 and 45 pitches, can pitch on Saturday. Barrows entered with one out in the fourth and a 2-2 count on the McKinleyville batter and recorded a strikeout on the first pitch he threw. He fanned the next hitter, then struck out two of the next three batters in a 1-2-3 fifth stanza.

"Brenden is a crafty pitcher," Jeff Cozad said. "We have some crafty pitchers on our team."

Hillsborough outhit McKinleyville 11-3 with three doubles and committed just one error.

"It was good to come down here and get this win under our belt," Cozad said.

"We'll have to play better against Saratoga," Goodman added. "We can play better."

There is no secret about that.

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