

Leaving no doubt

By Nathan Mollat
DAILY JOURNAL STAFF

PALO ALTO — The Hillsborough 11-12 year-old All Star Team put an exclamation point on its march to the District 52 championship at Sunken Diamond Field in Palo Alto.

With a dominating 21-7 win over Foster City, this Hillsborough team can lay claim to the title of "Dynasty." With the exception of two players, this Hillsborough team is the exact same squad that won back-to-back 10-11 year-old District 52 championships the previous two seasons. Thursday's win was the fourth time in five games that Hillsborough won a game by virtue of the 10-run mercy rule. In those five games, Hillsborough outscored its opponents by a mind-boggling margin of 69-12.

"Our district, District 52, is a tremendous district. Just getting out of our district is an incredible accomplishment," said Hillsborough manager Jeff Cozad. "These guys have played in 45-plus all-star games. They've been in a lot of big games."

Hillsborough beat Foster City in normal fashion: Strong pitching, solid defense and superior hitting. While Hillsborough is a complete team, there is one thing at which it excels — hitting. Boy, can these kids swing it. Hillsborough banged out 17 hits, with eight of the 12 players on the roster getting at least one hit. Hillsborough also belted four home runs and had five different players drive in two runs or more.

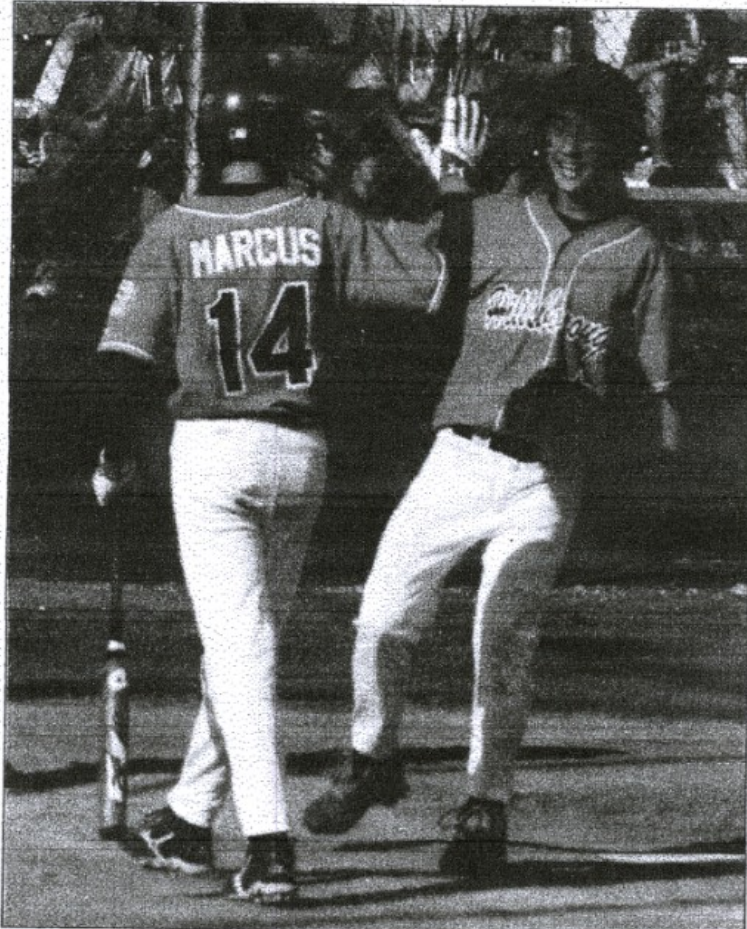
The big hitting star for Hillsborough was catcher Chris Mark, who homered in his first two at-bats to give his team a big cushion and finished with six runs driven in.

"Everyone on the team has been through big moments," Mark said. "Today was my day."

Grant Goodman drove in three, Austin Marcus, Frankie Ferrari and Brock Cozad all drove in two runs apiece. Marcus also went 4 for 5 on the day, while Goodman rapped out three hits and Mark, Wil Reilly, Greg Pratt and Cozad all had two hits apiece.

Mark came to the plate in the top of the first with two outs and Austin Marcus on first with a single. On a 1-1 pitch, Mark drilled an opposite field shot over the right-field fence for a 2-0 Hillsborough lead. It was Mark who provided the big shot in Hillsborough's seven-run second when he smacked another opposite-field shot on an 0-2 pitch.

Mark wasn't the only one to provide some pop. Ferrari and Reilly hit back-to-back jacks in the fourth inning — Ferrari's to dead cen-



NATHAN MOLLAT / DAILY JOURNAL
Hillsborough's Austin Marcus, left, congratulates Chris Mark following the first of his two home runs during their 21-7 win over Foster City in the District 52 Majors championship.

ter field and Reilly a line drive over the left field fence.

Hillsborough capped the game with a nine-run fifth as seven different players had an RBI.

The early run support proved to be crucial as Foster City was not about to go down without a fight. After being retired in order in the first, Foster City erupted for five runs on four hits against Hillsborough starter Henry Caruso. The first three batters of the inning

reached safely, with Drew Botta driving home Brendan Toy for Foster City's first run of the game. Following a groundout, Freddie Whitman drew a walk to bring up leadoff hitter Stephan Ostrowski, who gave the Foster City fans plenty to cheer about when he roped a 0-1 pitch over the left-field fence for a three-run shot. Suddenly, Foster City trailed 9-5.

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Caruso made sure that would be the only uprising Foster City would have. He came out to pitch the third and promptly struck out the side. He retired the side in order in the fourth before both he and Mark appeared to tire in the fifth as Foster City plated two runs on a pair of wild pitches.

"(I had to) keep a positive attitude. Once I got that first strikeout (in the third), I got in a groove," Caruso said. "I know our team is going to hit. It's all about trust and believing in the guys."

When Caruso got Jason Lock to chase a ball up in the strike zone for his seventh strikeout and the final out of the game, the Hillsborough players met up on the mound. After a few moments of subdued celebration, the dog pile began.

Even after three straight District 52 titles, the thrill of winning a championship doesn't get old.

"We enjoy every minute of it," Caruso said. "We enjoy this stuff."

Added Mark: "It's always exciting (to celebrate a district title)."