

# Hillsborough Little League teammates have famous baseball ancestors



**Oakland Tribune**

July 11, 2009 | Rick Chandler

BELMONT -- Brenden Barrows and Billy Funkhouser thought they had a lot in common, but until recently they had no idea just how much.

The two were co-MVPs in the majors division of Hillsborough Little League during the regular season, and have been the catalysts as their Hillsborough All-Star team has charged undefeated into the District 52 winners-bracket final at Marina Park in Belmont. Hillsborough beat Pacifica American, 12-7, on Wednesday to make it to the title game.

But just about a month ago, before the All-Star tournament began, Barrows and Funkhouser discovered that they each have a famous ancestor who also played on the same team -- the 1909 World Champion Pittsburgh Pirates. Sam Leever, a star pitcher on that Pittsburgh team, is Brenden's great-great uncle. And Fred Clarke, the Pirates' player-manager that season and a member of the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame, is Billy's great-great grandfather. This came as big news to both boys.

"We didn't realize the connection until one day when my mom was showing Billy and I a baseball from that World Series," Barrows said. "Then we found out we both had relatives on that team. It's amazing that it was almost exactly a hundred years ago."

"It was just before All-Stars when we found out," Funkhouser said. "It did something to our team, because since then we've become beasts."

How else would you describe this hitting attack? Barrows and Funkhouser each had four hits in Wednesday's victory, and Barrows was the winning pitcher, striking out seven. Hillsborough struck for 17 hits, including three home runs and four doubles, with a five-run sixth being its biggest inning. Barrows, Nick Franco and Brett Arimoto had homers in that inning.

"We have a lot of confidence," said Gordon Barrows, Brenden's twin brother. "(Former San Francisco Giant) Terry Whitfield, our hitting coach, has taught us to 'think hit.' He's really helped us to focus."

Eric Whitfield, Terry's son, had a pair of singles and scored three runs.

Funkhouser also excelled in the field, making a leaping stop at third and finishing off the runner with an excellent throw to lead off the fifth. Gordon Barrows and Mark Anthony Vogel each had a double. For Pacifica American, Ray Falk had a line-drive solo homer in the second, and Dominic Cortese had two singles and an RBI.

The Barrows brothers and Funkhouser have some pretty big cleats to fill. Leever had a lifetime 2.47 ERA and a 194-100 career record. Clarke was a left fielder who hit .300 or better in 11 different seasons (during the dead-ball era), and owns the 11th-longest hitting streak in Major League history at 35 games.

Rick Chandler

Copyright 2009 Oakland Tribune