

Monday
November
12
2012
5:11 pm



AdChoices

RSS feed
Daily Journal Quick Poll

In San Mateo County, early voting begins Oct. 8. When are you planning to vote?

- As soon as possible
- I'll wait a week after my ballot arrives
- I'll wait until closer to the election
- Election Day

VOTE VIEW RESULTS

AdChoices

THE DAILY JOURNAL

The Peninsula's homepage

- Home
- Local News
- State / National / World
- Sports
- Opinion / Letters
- Business
- Arts / Entertainment
- Lifestyle
- Obituaries
- Calendar
- Submit Event
- Comics / Games
- DJ Designers
- Archives
- Advertise With Us
- About Us

The print edition in its entirety. Click here to see it.

Click here for locations of where to find Daily Journal news racks.



DOJO USA
World Training Center
731 Kains Avenue
San Bruno
www.dojousa.net
650-589-9148

VISIT US ON FACEBOOK! Click here

Follow us on Twitter!

Fresh faces represent District 52

July 13, 2012, 05:00 AM By Nathan Mollat, Daily Journal Staff

Hillsborough Little League has been the face of District 52 for the better part of the last decade, more often than not winning all-star titles and representing the Peninsula at the sectional and regional tournaments.

For once, however, the masses that are the rest of the Little League organizations in District 52 will get a chance to represent the Peninsula. For the first time since 2003, a Hillsborough team won't represent District 52 in sectional play in any of the three, major age groups — 9-10 (minors), 10-11 and 11-12 (majors).

Do three new champions represent a shift in power in District 52? One year does not a streak make, but a deeper look shows promising developments in Belmont, Foster City and Pacifica.

Pacifica American, the 2012 9-10 champion, has now won two district titles in as many years, capturing the 10-11 title in 2011.

It's the first-ever 9-10 district championship for Pacifica American, which used to dominate the majors (11-12) bracket in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

It was a different time, however, Pacifica manager Steve Falk said his dad played during those years and said, "I think [the district tournament] was really, really small," Falk said. "My dad said ... it was only three or four teams.

"It's much more difficult to win a district title now."

Given the success of the Terra Nova High baseball team last season, coupled with an up-and-coming crop of good ball players, the significance of what winning Little League titles can do for a community cannot be overemphasized.

"We had a pizza party [Wednesday night] and just tons of people came out to congratulate us," Falk said.

Falk likes his team's chances when it kicks off Section 3 play at 11 a.m. Saturday at San Mateo's Lakeshore Park. While pitching and defense generally win championships, it helps to have a lineup that can do damage.

That is precisely what Pacifica American has in No. 2, 3 and 4 hitters in Christian Falk, Andrew Harkness and Elijah White — all who played in the Majors Division this season as 10-year-olds.

"They were playing against 12-year-olds all season and all had fantastic seasons," said Steve Falk, adding that trio combined for eight of the team's 11 home runs during all-star play.

"Before we won [district], all I wanted to do was win district, everything else was gravy," Falk said. "But even sitting around [after winning the title], the coaches are now saying, 'I just want to win section. Everything else is gravy.'"

Belmont-Redwood Shores also won its second title in two years when it won the 10-11 all-star tournament — beating Hillsborough twice in the process.

The 10-11 Belmont squad is essentially the same team that captured the 9-10 tournament in 2011. Led by the hitting of Dominic Susa and the pitching of Sean Lee — who was popping his catcher's mitt with 69 mph fastballs — the Belmont All-Stars out-scored its opponents 47-14.

Belmont will be the only District 52 champion that has to go on the road for the sectional tournament, having to cross a bridge to get to Los Cerros field in Danville for a Saturday morning state.

Foster City's win in the District 52 Majors Tournament was probably the most surprising of all, considering Hillsborough had won the five previous titles. What makes the 11-12 level so glamorous is it's the division that plays in the Little League World Series in Williamsport, Pa. and all the hoopla that surrounds that event.

Like Belmont, Foster City beat Hillsborough twice — once in the winner's bracket final and again in the championship game. Not only did it end a 20-year championship drought in the 11-12 bracket, Foster City manager Steve Sutter admitted there was a certain amount of satisfaction in beating the five-time reigning champs.

"When we beat Hillsborough [the first time], I said, 'Get ready. We're going to see this team again,'" Sutter said. "If you're going to take the title, you want to take it from the defending champ."

Sutter hopes the defense and pitching that allowed only six runs in five games, shows up during the Section 3 tournament taking place in Hillsborough beginning at 11 a.m. Saturday.

Sutter expects nothing but top-notch talent to be on display.

"When you get to this level, you plan on playing a [Hillsborough-type game] every single game," Sutter said.

While it may sound like jealousy for programs to be happy about knocking off Hillsborough, Hillsborough has actually helped the entire district raise its level of play.

"Hillsborough has always set the bar. They prepare for district ball, which is different than the rest of the district. Not everybody sets that goal," Sutter said. "There is no doubt the level of District 52 baseball has gotten better (as a result of a strong Hillsborough program). ... The quality (of play) has definitely gone up. ... Everybody is playing better baseball."

Falk said Pacifica American tries to emulate Hillsborough — and a lot of other programs — by getting as many players to play baseball year round, whether on summer travel teams or fall-ball leagues.

Falk said the landscape for Pacifica baseball has changed quickly in a short amount of time. When his now 15-year-old son was playing in the majors tournament, he said, there were only two Pacifica travel-ball teams.

Now, Falk says there are about a dozen tournament teams representing Pacifica. It's a far cry from his Pacifica Little



Nathan Mollat/Daily Journal Whether it's Pacifica American catcher Spencer Karalius tagging out a runner, top, or Belmont's Brad Shimabuku throwing to first to complete a double play, all three District 52 champions relied on stellar defense to win district titles.



League playing days.

"It was Little League season and then it was summer time," Falk said. "And then you waited for the next Little League season."

For Belmont, Foster City and Pacifica boys of summer, there's hope their schedules will be busy for just a few weeks longer.

 [Print this Page](#) | [SHARE](#)   

[<< Back](#)

[smdailyjournal.com User Agreement](#)

[Archives Home](#) • [San Mateo Daily Journal Home](#) • [Local News](#) • [State / National / World](#) • [Sports](#) • [Opinion / Letters](#) • [Business](#)
[Arts / Entertainment](#) • [Lifestyle](#) • [Obituaries](#) • [Calendar](#) • [Submit Event](#)
[Comics / Games](#) • [Classifieds](#) • [DJ Designers](#) • [Archives](#) • [Advertise With Us](#) • [Contact Us](#) • [About Us](#)

©2012 Daily Journal - San Mateo County's homepage

[Litter Barrel](#)