

FEATURED

Two chances to win state title

Hillsborough's 10-11 and 9-10 all-star teams both advance to the state championship tournaments

By Nathan Mollat Daily Journal Staff Jul 21, 2017



The Peninsula continues to prove that when it comes to youth baseball, there are very few areas better than San Mateo County.

With the Belmont-Redwood Shores and Pacifica American teams winning Little League Northern California state titles over the last couple years, along with a Babe Ruth Bel-Mateo U14 state title last week, the county has definitely put itself on the baseball map.

Hillsborough Little League has epitomized the Peninsula dominance. League president Doug Robbins estimates the organization has won 50-plus championship banners. The league has added six more this summer alone, with both the 9-10, 10-11 and Intermediate (50-70) All-Star teams having won both district and section banners.

But there is one banner missing from the Hillsborough trophy case: a state championship. The closest Hillsborough came to winning a NorCal state title was in 2007, when the 10-11 all-star team lost two in a row in the championship series to be denied the crown.

Starting this weekend, Hillsborough will have two opportunities to remedy that situation. The 10-11 Hillsborough All-Stars kick off the state tournament at 10 a.m. Sunday in Fremont, while the 9-10 all-star team's first-round game is at 8 p.m. Saturday in Yuba City.

"You have to find way to keep [the players] motivated," said Robbins, who is also the 10-11 all-star manager. "We have a rich tradition, but no team has won state. We try to use that as a carrot."

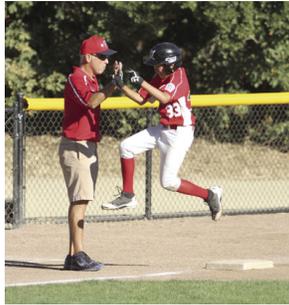
Both Hillsborough squads certainly have more than a puncher's chance, as both teams have been raking the ball this summer. Robbins' squad is 7-1 through two tournaments thus far, averaging 8.2 runs per game. Hillsborough went 4-0 in capturing the District 52 title, outscoring its opponents 36-17. It went on to win its first two Section 3 games by a combined score of 15-5 to advance to the championship round. San Ramon, which lost to Hillsborough in the first round, beat it in the first round of the championship series, 5-3. Hillsborough came back the next night and won the championship, riding a two-run homer and three-run shot to a 5-3 victory over the East Bay team.

The 9-10 all-star squad has been even more dominant. It is 8-0 this summer, having outscored the competition 85-23 and averaging more than 10 runs per game. It ran roughshod through District 52 play, scoring 53 runs while allowing just 15. Hillsborough posted a pair of shutouts and scored nine or more runs in four of the five games.

The 9-10 team continued its torrid hitting in the Section 3 tournament in San Leandro. It outscored its first two

opponents 17-1. Tassajara Valley managed to put some pressure on Hillsborough in the Section 3 title game, a game Hillsborough won 15-7, but Hillsborough jumped out to an 8-0 lead before Tassajara Valley rallied.

Anikin Manuel has been a beast on the mound and at the plate for the 9-10 team and has shined the brightest on the biggest stage. He had a big hand in capturing both the district and section crowns. He pitched a one-hit, complete-game shutout in the District 52 championship game, striking out eight along the way. At the plate, he went 4 for 4 with two singles and two doubles.



Anikin Manuel has been a driving force for the Hillsborough 9-10

All-Star team.

Daily Journal Sports File

In the Section 3 title game, Manuel went 4 for 5 at the plate, with three RBIs and four runs scored.

The 10-11 all-star success should not come as too surprising as a core of this year's squad — Dylan Kall, Kevin Macy, Whitaker Tollmann and Conrad Wilbur — were on the 9-10 team that advanced to the NorCal state tournament two years ago.

Kall has been especially dominant this summer. During District 52 play, Kall batted .780 with five home runs and 11 RBIs. He also started on the mound for the district title game.

He got the call again in the Section 3 final, working 4 1/3 innings in earning the win. And it was his three-run blast that gave his team the lead and ended up being the winning hit.

But Robbins, who played for Stanford's national championship teams in 1987 and 1988, knows it take more than a handful of good players to win a state championship.

“We've had some tremendous (individual) performances,” Robbins said. “But you can't move on (to the next tournament) without a team effort.”