

FEATURED

## Hillsborough 10-11s earn first Nor Cal win with retooled lineup

By Terry Bernal Daily Journal Staff 4 hrs ago



FREMONT — And the Hillsborough 10-11s All-Star team is off and running.

Falling to the elimination bracket with a loss in Sunday's opener of the Northern California 10-11s All-Star Championship Tournament, Hillsborough needed win five straight games entering Monday's matchup with Redwood Empire to earn the title.

One down, four to go, as three Hillsborough pitchers — Thomas Egbert, Conrad Wilbur and Drew Lyons — combined to fire a one-hit shutout in a 6-0 win over Redwood Empire, from the city of Cutten just south of Eureka, Monday at Marshall Park.

“It was nice to not be playing from behind,” Hillsborough manager Doug Robbins said. “And the pitchers, they threw a heck of a game.”

Robbins shook things up Monday, retooling a starting lineup that has been in tact since the beginning of the All-Star season. After Sunday's game in which they didn't get on the board until the fourth inning, the Hillsborough offense rallied Monday for three runs in the top of the first inning to set the tone.

“We wanted to shake up the lineup and get these guys a little more focused,” Robbins said. “And it seemed to have worked.”

The effect a three-run cushion had on Hillsborough’s pitching staff is tough to quantify. But it sure didn’t hurt. And after the starting pitcher Egbert set down the first six batters he faced in fairly dominant fashion, there wasn’t a moment when Hillsborough wasn’t in the driver’s seat.

“It (the lead) makes me more relaxed because I know if I let out any hits, I have some wiggle room,” Egbert said.

But the right-hander didn’t give up any hits. His defense set the tone with two nice plays to open the bottom of the first inning. Shortstop Dean Dollosso recorded the first out with a sweet backhanded stab on a smash into the hole, then fired a short-hop across the diamond that first baseman Dylan Kall picked seamlessly to rob Rogan Bode of a hit. On the very next pitch, Redwood Empire’s Myles Standish hit a sharp line drive but right at Dollosso, who gloved it for the second out.

From there, Egbert struck out the next four batters he faced before giving way to the bullpen to keep his pitch count low. While Egbert threw a total of 23 pitches in the game, he started his last batter with under 20, keeping him under the pitch cap to allow him to throw Tuesday, if necessary. So goes the pitch-count management for a team faced with playing every day through the elimination bracket.

“It’s paramount,” Robbins said of Hillsborough’s economy of pitches. “You’ve got to play to win each day but, then again, you’ve got to have some resources the next game.”

Enter Wilbur, who bridged the gap in the middle innings with 2  $\frac{2}{3}$  solid frames. The right-hander allowed the only Redwood Empire hit of the night, a fourth-inning single to center by Tyler Dimmick. But he settled in from there to set down the last three batters he faced, then handed the ball over to Lyons who worked 1  $\frac{1}{3}$  innings and combined with Wilbur to retire the final seven batters of the game in order.

On the offensive side of the ball, Hillsborough flexed its muscles with an RBI double by Lyons to cap the three-run rally in the first, and a two-run home run by Kevin Macy in the fifth.

During a postgame interview, though, when Macy was asked about the homer, Robbins quickly interjected with congratulations on Macy’s hustle in the first inning that got Hillsborough on the scoreboard.

With the bases loaded and two outs in the first, Macy topped a grounder to the right side of the infield. But a low throw to first didn't get picked clean, and Macy sprinted through the bag to allow not only Kall to score from third base, but for Dollosso to motor all the way around from second to give Hillsborough a 2-0 lead.

In the fourth, Hillsborough added an insurance run by virtue of a two-out rally. Whitaker Tollmann singled and took second base on a wild pitch. Wilbur followed with an RBI Texas League single to left, upping the lead to 4-0.

Then Macy made some noise in the fifth inning with his first home run of the Nor Cal tournament. It was a new assignment for Macy, hitting in the No. 6 spot. Every game previous through the All-Star season he had served as Hillsborough's cleanup hitter. But when he saw the starting lineup card Monday, he quickly realized the benefit.

"I was a little surprised," Macy said. "But I looked at the benefit of it; they throw a lot of junk when you're hitting higher in the order. So, tonight I got a lot better pitches to hit."

Sure enough, with Nate Balch at first base and one out, Macy got a low fastball and jumped on it to deposit it over the center-field fence.

"I just felt the connection and it just sailed out," Macy said.

Next up for Hillsborough is Tuesday night's matchup against Porterville. First pitch is scheduled for 5:30 p.m.