

FEATURED

Hillsborough 10-11s fall in Northern California championship game

By Terry Bernal Daily Journal Staff Jul 28, 2017 Updated 10 hrs ago



FREMONT — It was the closest 9-1 game you'll ever see.

But, as the final strike was recorded, and Tri-City celebrated the Northern California championship, it spelled the end of the line for the Hillsborough Little League 10-11s All-Stars.

Hillsborough settled for runners-up in the Northern California 10-11s All-Star Championship Tournament — not a bad haul for a team that lost the tournament opener and had to advance through the elimination bracket with three wins on three consecutive nights.

Thursday's 9-1 loss to Tri-City of Rocklin in the championship game marked Hillsborough's fifth game in five days. While ragged on pitching depth, the resilient group surely was hoping to advance to Friday's what-if game to make it six straight days. And they rode their winning streak into Thursday's showdown riding high.

"We were really excited," Hillsborough's Tyler Spitzer-Wu said. "We were definitely thinking we were going to win. But it didn't turn out."

The lopsided final score does not do justice to the tremendous pitching duel that ensued through the first two innings. Hillsborough opened the game with a line-drive, opposite-field home run by Dylan Kall on the second pitch of the night. Then, with the way Tri-City winning pitcher Aiden Weissenberg and Hillsborough right-hander Thomas Egbert were dueling, it seemed that 1-0 differential might just hold up.

“I thought we had a good lead,” Hillsborough shortstop Dean Dollosso said, “enough that we could hold them. But they’re a good team. They can hit.”

When Tri-City did break through for a four-run rally in the third inning, it wasn’t exactly a thunder show. Egbert — after cautiously navigating through the middle of the order by loading the bases on back-to-back singles and a walk to the No. 3 hitter Weissenberg — was actually one out away from escaping the jam unscathed.

But then — just after Hillsborough third baseman Kevin Macy gunned down a runner at the plate on a grounder for the second out of the inning — Tri-City No. 5 hitter Tanner Dykstra hit a hard chopper off the dirt in front of home plate; the high bouncer carried toward third base and just over the outstretched glove of Macy for a two-run single. And it seemed to burst Hillsborough’s magic bubble.

Gavin Correia followed with a similar high one-hopper over the middle that Dollosso at shortstop could do nothing with. Then Johnathon Vavak hit a sharp grounder to the backhand of Dollosso that the shortstop missed on a do-or-die olé play, giving Tri-City a 4-1 lead.

“They were some seeing-eye hits,” Hillsborough manager Doug Robbins said. “They found the holes. Then they got momentum. And then [Egbert] got tired.”

Tri-City went on to add two runs in the fourth on a two-run home run by Tyler Allen, then three more in the fifth while knocking Egbert out of the game. The right-hander worked four-plus innings to take the loss, but drew deserved raves from Doug Robbins for the way he delivered as a workhorse throughout the Nor Cal tourney.

“The whole summer he has pitched well,” Doug Robbins said. “But the two brief appearances he had the last few nights, and tonight, he was as best as I’ve seen him.”

Kall took over in the fifth and would be charged with two runs. The backbreaker was the game's final score, a strikeout-wild pitch with the bases loaded and two outs that allowed Brock Kruse to score from third. Hillsborough catcher William Robbins raced to the backstop to retrieve the wild pitch, then motored back in an alert attempt to step on the plate for the force out on Kruse, but was just a second late, as if the game's outcome depended on it.

"I think it's still pretty important because if we come back, then they'd need those runs," William Robbins said.

Hillsborough made a last-gasp effort in the sixth and final inning. Macy drew a two-out walk, then Dollosso followed with a solid single to right. Weissenberg stranded both runners though, finishing off the Nor Cal title with his 11th strikeout of the night to cap a three-hit complete game.

"He was a really good pitcher," Spitzer-Wu said. "He really mixed up his pitches well. At first he was only throwing fastballs but later he started mixing in curveballs."

The loss was a tough fate for Egbert, who has a rich history with Doug Robbins going back to the Hillsborough Little League regular season. It was Egbert's Reds who won the league's postseason title, backed by a complete-game victory by Egbert in the championship game. That gem came against Doug Robbins' Padres team.

Thursday, Egbert seemed poised to do the same in the early going, hitting his spots with precision with all three of his pitches. Through the first two innings, he recorded a strikeout and four groundouts.

"I was relieved," Hillsborough right fielder Drew Lyons said. "I didn't have to do anything. There was no pressure on me."

Lyons was downplaying the enormous pressure put on these 11-year-old All-Stars though, playing every night in front of hundreds of intense fans, making the immensely difficult sport of baseball look like the seamless and easy sport it appears to be when played right.

"I'm very proud of all these boys," Doug Robbins said. "It's a lot of baseball in a short amount of time for 11-year olds. They showed a lot of character and they showed a lot of

commitment. They're a great group of kids. And for the coaching staff, it's been great to be associated with them for a month plus."

Hillsborough's summer roster in its entirety: Manager, Doug Robbins; assistant coaches, Chad Forrest, Vic Dollosso and Ken Tollmann; players, Nathan Balch, Dean Dollosso, Theo Ebersman, Thomas Egbert, Kyle Forrest, Dylan Kall, Drew Lyons, Kevin Macy, William Robbins, Tyler Spitzer-Wu, Whitaker Tollmann, Conrad Wilbur and Cooper Wong.