

FEATURED

Hillsborough set for District 52 title round

By Terry Bernal Daily Journal Staff Jul 3, 2018 Updated 4 hrs ago



Hillsborough's Collin Firestone bats in the 2017 Northern California championship game.

Daily Journal File Photo

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The championship matchups are set for the District 52 Little League tournaments, which conclude this week. And in the 10- 11s bracket, if the unbeaten Hillsborough team feels like it's been here before, it's because it has.

After claiming the District 52 9-10s championship last season, the same core Hillsborough team has stormed through the winners' bracket this year with four straight wins — opening with a 2-0 victory over San Mateo National, then winning 10-0 over Menlo-Atherton, 12-1 over Palo Alto, and 5-2 over San Carlos.

"Knock on wood, it's been going pretty well," Hillsborough manager Ben Coughlin said.

Hillsborough set for District 52 title round (Continued)

When the 10-11s championship round opens Tuesday at the Belmont Sports Complex, Hillsborough gets its first crack at Foster City, the team that knocked off San Carlos 5-0 in the final game of the elimination bracket Monday night at Marina Field.

With one loss in the tournament, Foster City need beat Hillsborough twice to take the title. A second game, if necessary, is slated for Wednesday. Further handicapping Foster City, the team will have three pitchers unavailable Tuesday due to pitch-count limits.

Still, Foster City is riding high after starting pitcher Joshua Mayol fired a four-hit shutout Monday to advance.

"They're very excited," Foster City manager Mark Callagy said. "This team, the whole tournament ... these guys feel they can go out and play anybody, play hard, and with good defense beat anybody."

Hillsborough pitchers have allowed just three runs in the tournament and enter Tuesday with a 0.26 staff ERA.

Right-hander Anakin Manuel has recorded two complete games, most recently in last Friday's semifinal. Manuel was one of Hillsborough's best all-around players last season when the team advanced to the Northern California Championship game.

Manuel was scheduled to pitch that game in Sutter, but suffered an off-field injury the night before the game. Hillsborough went on to lose to Nor Cal champion River Park 10-7.

"He had a freak injury the day before, so he was out of that game," Ben Coughlin said. "He was going to start that game as our pitcher."

Manuel returned to form in this year's District 52 tournament opener June 23, firing a two-hit shutout against San Mateo National. He faced four over the minimum, but had to duel into the sixth inning amid a scoreless tie.

"It was a tough game out of the gates," Ben Coughlin said. "That's a good team. It was a well-pitched game on both sides. Not a lot of hits. And as it goes with all these games, the boys were all a little tense, a little nervous."

In the sixth, Hillsborough broke through. Pinch-hitter Reed Sheputis set the table by working a walk. Then slugger Beau Schaffer hit a two-run home run to left, which proved to be the game-winner.

Hillsborough set for District 52 title round (Continued)

Schaffer is batting .636 (7 for 11) with three home runs and 12 RBIs in the tournament.

Foster City has relied more on stringing hits together to produce runs, as it did Monday against San Carlos. In the third inning, Foster City broke a scoreless tie with some two-out hitting. Brady Callagy got things started with a one-out walk. Then with two outs, Mayol singled, followed by RBI knocks from Rustam Fouret, Mason Kang and Arjun Godbole.

In the fifth, Foster City produced some more two-out sparks. Caden Wei drew a two-out walk. Then pinch-runner A.J. Kong advanced to third on a passed ball, followed by a wild pitch. Mayol followed with an RBI single. Mayol later scored on an infield error, then marched back out to the mound to finish off the shutout.

Mayol totaled six strikeouts, walked none and needed just 66 pitches to go the distance.

“[Mayol] came in and was just lights out,” Mark Callagy said.

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(Editors Note: Misspelled names and minor punctuation were edited from the San Mateo Daily Journal online version.)