

FEATURED

Hillsborough walks off in Nor Cal quarterfinals

By Terry Bernal Daily Journal Staff

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Will Hirsch, seen here in a previous game, provided a two-run, walk-off double in Hillsborough's 3-2 victory in the Division 2 Little League 10-11s tournament Sunday in West Sacramento.

Daily Journal File Photo



WEST SACRAMENTO – A team can start sensing that championship destiny when it gets a big moment from an unlikely hero.

Will Hirsch provided that moment for the Hillsborough Little League 10-11s All-Stars in Sunday's Division 2 Northern California winners' bracket quarterfinals at Memorial Park in West Sacramento.

Hillsborough went into its final at-bat in the bottom of the sixth inning trailing Linden Little League by a run, but back-to-back singles by Luke Levitt and Quinn Folk to open the frame set the table for Hirsch. And Hillsborough's No. 9 hitter came through, drilling a double to center field to score both pinch-runner Tolu Carroll and Folk to finish off a 3-2 walk-off win.

Hillsborough walks off in Nor Cal quarterfinals (Continued)

“The boys, they were pumped,” Hillsborough manager Ben Coughlin said. “It was a tense game. And we knew we had squandered a lot of chances. So emotions were running a little bit low. So we were able to scratch it together in the last inning. It was a big moment for Will. It was good to see him come through.”

One day after a 9-0 romp over Scotts Valley in the tourney opener, Hillsborough suffered through a slow start Sunday. Ace right-hander Anakin Manuel dominated with his arm, allowing just one hit through 3 1/3 innings while striking out nine. But Hillsborough committed four errors in the game, including two by Manuel in the third inning as Linden rallied for two unearned runs to jump out to a 2-0 lead.

“He pitched well,” Ben Coughlin said. “We had one funky inning on defense. Ironically, it was a couple balls that were hit to Anakin that he just bobbled, and they were able to get some runners on and score some runs.”

In the fourth, Hillsborough cut the lead in half thanks to some funky pitching from Linden. Walks to Ryan Drake and Carroll preceded KC Chavinson getting hit by a pitch. Then Nate Coughlin drew a walk to force home Drake, making it a 2-1 deficit.

With Hillsborough intent on keeping Manuel under 65 pitches — making him available for a potential championship round starting Thursday — right-hander Nate Coughlin entered in relief in the fourth. And boy did he bridge the middle innings, working 1 2/3 while striking out five. Beau Schaffer fired a shutout inning in the top of the sixth to earn the win.

Hillsborough now advances to the winners’ bracket semifinal to face Maidu Little League of Granite Bay. First pitch at Memorial Park is scheduled for 5:45 p.m.

HMB falls to Majors elimination bracket

Half Moon Bay made history in Saturday’s Division 2 Little League Northern California Majors opener, rallying for a 16-9 win over Almaden-San Jose to become the first team from the Coastside ever to earn a Nor Cal victory.

Sunday, however, HMB fell to the elimination bracket with a 10-5 loss to Tri-City at Alta Mesa Park in Redding.

In Saturday’s opener, HMB opened in thrilling fashion as its first four batters of the tourney reached base; Ben Cleary, Charlie Underwood and Liam Harrington each singled before Ian Armstrong belted a first-inning grand slam.

“It was a great start,” HMB manager Don Scatena said.

Hillsborough walks off in Nor Cal quarterfinals (Continued)

But Sunday, it was Tri-City which found the grand slam mojo in third inning and running up an early 8-0 lead.

HMB sparked some offense with two hits from each Harrington and Cleary.

“We battled back a bit,” Scatena said.

HMB now takes on Turlock American Monday at 5 p.m.

“I’m not hugely concerned with getting through [the elimination bracket],” Scatena said. “We have the pitching and the kids have the mental toughness. I’m more concerned about the timing of our games.”

Scatena’s concerns were about the temperatures of the early-evening starts. He said the heat is still a factor a 5 p.m., unlike the later 7:30 p.m. starts. HMB has yet to play a later game.

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HLL Editor’s Note: Minor typos and name spellings corrected.