

Young Hillsborough shows poise

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Minors team takes older opposition to school in Superbowl

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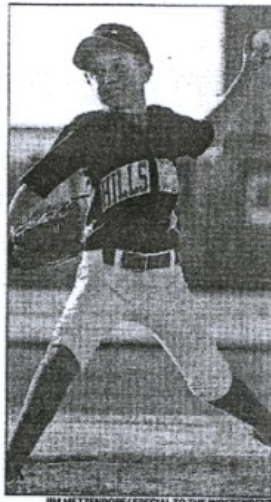
BELMONT — Expect a repeat of the District 52 Little League Minors Superbowl championship next year. Same Hillsborough team. Same Hillsborough players.

The reason being, the 10-and-under Hillsborough squad that captured the crown last Wednesday at the Belmont Sports Complex with a 12-2 win over San Mateo National is composed primarily of 9-year olds; three-quarters of the championship-game roster, in fact. So if Hillsborough coach Jeff Cozad can reunite the team next year, there is an exceptional chance for a repeat.

"They got together last summer as 8-year olds," said Cozad. "They really elevated their game... They always played a year or two [older teams]. They always played bigger kids."

Wednesday's championship showdown was no different. San Mateo outsized Hillsborough dramatically. And within the first three batters of the game, San Mateo looked as if it might likewise dominate. Three-hitter Nick Miguel crushed an RBI double to left-center, and later scored on Cole Stillman's bases-loaded groundout to give San Mateo an early 2-0 lead.

Hillsborough pitcher Trent Friedlander refused to fold under the pressure though. He stranded two San Mateo runners in scoring position in the first inning, and



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Trent Friedlander was a bulldog on the mound, pitching out of two bases-loaded jams.

proceeded to escape unscathed in both the second and the fourth by leaving the bases loaded. His most impressive inning was in the third, when he set the side down in order, after the Hillsborough offense generated eight runs in the bottom of the second.

"I was just happy to get through the bases loaded [jams]," Friedlander said.

You wouldn't know he was happy to watch his mannerisms on the hill. A fierce competitor, Friedlander follows each pitch not batted into play by marching off the mound towards the plate to hurry the ball back from the catcher. The south-paw's grizzly demeanor and stoic game-face are notorious among competing batters. All-star team-



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Hillsborough celebrates its victory over San Mateo National for the Minors Superbowl championship.

mate Charlie Boyd recalled facing him during their Hillsborough Little League season.

"Sometimes when he's pitching like this, he's just staring at you," said Boyd. "It's kind of scary."

Friedlander struck out three, and kept the defense on their toes by inducing 10 groundouts. The Hillsborough defense responded by committing just two errors in the game.

"They don't make a lot of mistakes," said Cozad. "That was our M.O. from the get-go."

In the second inning, seven Hillsborough batters contributed one

RBI apiece — Will Reilly, Alec Guttas, Gordon Barrows, Colin Richards, Gregory Pratt, Trent's twin brother Zack Friedlander and Brendan Barrows. Gordon Barrows delivered the RBI single to give Hillsborough the lead, with a solid opposite-field single to left.

"He's an excellent bunter," said Cozad of Gordon Barrows, "and we worked on developing a fake-bunt swing to draw in the third baseman. He has this way of hacking the ball to left field. He lofted two balls over the third baseman's head tonight."

Hillsborough added three runs in the fourth with RBIs from Brock Cozad and Kevin Marren, and won the game via 10-run rule in the fifth when Guttas scored on a bases loaded walk to Richards. Andrew Segre and Boyd also contributed key hits during the final two innings.

Hillsborough won four straight games in earning the Superbowl championship, starting with a 17-7 win over Pacifica American June 25, followed by a 7-1 win over Menlo-Atherton June 26, and a 9-3 win over Palo Alto National June 27.

