

Hillsborough closing in on title, RV

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The Hillsborough 9-10-year-olds are one win away from the Little League Sectional championship after a 5-0 win on Monday, but the title is only the second most exciting thing for the boys.

"We're really pumped, because if we win this we're getting a really big RV for the team," said Austin Marcus, who pitched a complete-game shutout at Martens Field in San Mateo to force a final game against Pleasanton today at 5:30 p.m.

**HILLSBOROUGH 5,
PLEASANTON 0**

"And I think we've got a really good chance," Marcus added.

With a win at Sectionals, Hillsborough advances to play at Rockland — 400 miles and a nine-hour drive north. Manager Jeff Cozad, who made the promise, may grow to regret the decision and could be forced to tie down the 12 boys or strap them to the hood.

"I think they're more excited about that than anything," Cozad said. "I don't know what it is about RVs and kids, but they love it."

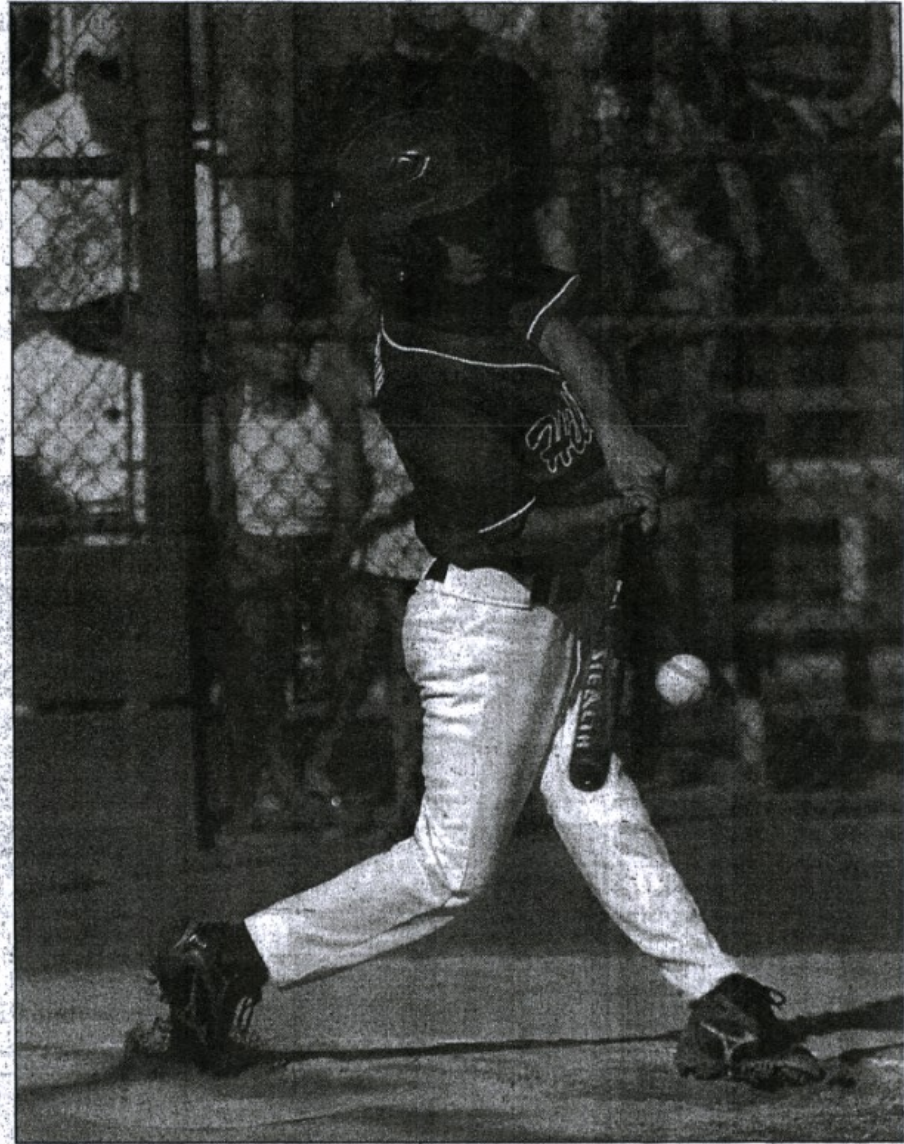
The one thing the Hillsborough team hates is losing, and that was the case the first time they played Pleasanton. A fifth-inning collapse relegated Hillsborough to the loser's bracket and forced them to take two in a row from Pleasanton to earn that RV.

"Now we switched the mode," Marcus said. "Now we're on the top and they're coming off a big loss."

"They don't like to lose, that's for sure," Cozad said. "They have a real competitive spirit."

That was most evident from second baseman Gordon Barrows. His three plate appearances were all productive in completely different ways.

Hillsborough jumped ahead in the bottom of the first when Henry Caruso led off with a double past the diving shortstop that rolled to the left-center fence. Grant Goodman singled with one out to put runners on



Richard Batman / Daily News

KEY HIT — Hillsborough's Grant Goodman strokes a single in Monday's 5-0 victory over Pleasanton. The two teams play again tonight to decide the championship.

the corners, and though he was caught stealing, Caruso took home on the throw to second.

So the first time Barrows came up in the

bottom of the second, Hillsborough was already up 1-0. Andrew Segre had led off with a double to left-center when Barrows

See **LITTLE LEAGUE**, page 4

LITTLE LEAGUE

From page 44

textbook sacrifice attempt was thrown into right field, scoring Segre and allowing Barrows to slide safely into third.

"I was just trying to get safe at first," Barrows said. "Then I was thinking of second and then I looked over and I saw them waving me to third."

An Andrew Schmitt chopper that didn't go even 10 feet from home plate resulted in a single that scored Barrows and it was 3-0 all of a sudden.

Hillsborough scored its final two runs in the bottom of the third. Walks to Frankie Ferrari and Marcus put two on with no outs, and Barrows took the opportunity to plate another run with a groundout. His brother Brenden Barrows followed that up with a sharp single to center field that capped the scoring.

Gordon Barrows added a bunt single in the bottom of the fifth, as Hillsborough racked up eight hits.

"We just didn't have our best hitting game (the first time) and we were pretty solid today," Marcus said.

But it was Gordon Barrows' chin that made the biggest play. Cozad, who calls Barrows a scrappy, fierce competitor, has known the diminutive second baseman since he was 3-years-old.

In the top of the third, a bad hop off the lip

of the grass slid under Barrows for a hit that just as easily could've been called an error. As Barrows charged a ball in the top of the fourth, he was determined not to make the same mistake and kept a low center of gravity. Now the bad hop jumped at him and struck Barrows' chin.

Before even bothering to grimace, Barrows barehanded the ball and got the out at first base by an eyelash.

"That was vintage Gordon," Cozad said. "The next time he was going to knock that down, no matter what. And he did, and he took it. That really lifts up our kids."

Another lift was provided by Marcus, the team's ace who was not on the mound the first time around against Pleasanton. Hitting his spots and changing his speeds, Marcus went six innings, allowing three hits, walking one and striking out four.

"His mechanics are exceptional and he gets in that rhythm," Cozad said.

Rules dictate that Marcus can't pitch again today, with a spot at Divisional for the NorCal championship on the line.

Hillsborough has four arms to choose from, so the arsenal will come in handy with a winner-take-all game awaiting.

"Hey, it's one game and all bets are off," Cozad told his team. "The game is up for grabs, right? We've got as good a shot as any."

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