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## Hillsborough champs

July 26, 2006, 12:00 AM By Emanuel Lee, Daily Journal Staff

Everything was setting up against the Hillsborough 9-and-10-year-old All-Star team in its Section 3 winner-take-all championship game against Pleasanton American.

The Piranhas were playing their sixth game in as many days, often in sweltering conditions, while Pleasanton, because of a first-round bye and its win over Hillsborough on Saturday, was playing its fourth.

It didn't matter.

Hillsborough showed it couldn't be stopped in a 3-1 win. The Piranhas advance to the Divisional/State Tournament starting Saturday in Rocklin.

So how did Hillsborough get it done? Simple. With hard work. Unless it is playing a game, the team practices every day. Not only that, coach Jeff Cozad works his players hard.

"I work them very hard in practice because I want to see how they perform under pressure, because the kids who perform well under difficult conditions will perform well in games," he said. "The kids showed so much heart. It's not easy playing six games in six days. I've coached a lot of these boys since T-ball, and they're all tough and have played in tense situations. When the game is on the line, they step up to the challenge."

When it comes to clutch performances, you'd be hard-pressed to top Grant Goodman, who hit a home run and also pitched three shutout innings of relief. Brenden Barrows started and tossed three innings of one-run ball. Early on, Pleasanton starter T.J. Friedl had the Hillsborough batters off-balanced, using an array of breaking pitches to stake his team to a 1-0 lead after three.

After threatening in the first only to come up empty, the Piranhas finally broke through in the fourth. Austin Marcus singled with one out and Charlie Boyd walked. Gordon Barrows followed with a single before Chris Mark stroked an RBI single to make it 1-1. Andrew Segre and Henry Caruso were hit by pitches, plating Barrows. In the next inning, Goodman went deep over the center-field fence to account for the game's final run. As he crossed home plate, Goodman was mobbed by his teammates, who rushed out of the dugout as if they were celebrating a walk-off homer.

"I was pumped up to hit that one out," Goodman said. "I knew it was gone right when I hit it. The win feels good, and we're ready to go to Rocklin. I'm just pumped. I didn't feel any pressure (pitching) because I had already pitched one of the championship games (in District 52). I was ready for this, and we're going to remember this for a while because we played a great tournament. We were a little tired, but we practice three hours a day every day, so it wasn't too bad."

Caruso, one of the best athletes on the team, made a sensational diving catch in shallow left-center field to save two runs in the fourth. Brock Cozad, Frankie Ferrari had two of the Piranhas' seven hits, while Will Reilly had another solid defensive day at first. Hillsborough won despite committing four errors.

"The one thing the coaches are most proud of is the fact that these kids are a close unit," Jeff Cozad said. "There were no cliques, and I'll remember that more than anything else."

In the postgame ceremonies, the Hillsborough players grabbed the Section 3 banner and did a victory lap, then unloaded the ice-cold water cooler on their coach. Moments earlier, posing for pictures, each of the players and coaches held their index finger in the air, signifying they were indeed No. 1 on this day.

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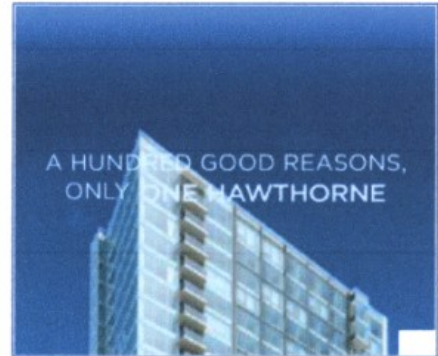
Arts by Corinne

What do you think of the Board of Supervisors' decision to not place a measure on the ballot allowing voters to decide between district and county-wide elections for supervisors?

- The current county-wide system is working fine
- There should be district elections to allow for more competitive races
- Either way, it should be up to the voters

VOTE

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