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- The current county-wide system is working fine
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- Either way, it should be up to the voters

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Hillsborough Little League just keeps winning

July 09, 2008, 12:00 AM By Emanuel Lee, Daily Journal Staff

PALO ALTO — There seems to be no stopping the Hillsborough 11-12-year-old All-Stars.

The defending District 52 champions are primed for a repeat, landing in this year's championship round after a 13-0, four-inning rout of Foster City on Tuesday at Palo Alto Little League's Sunken Diamond. Having won its first four games, Hillsborough must be beaten twice to lose the title. It has a chance to clinch the championship on Thursday, which now seems to be a mere formality.

"Tonight was our night, but it's never easy," Hillsborough manager Jeff Cozad said. "When the kids get out ahead they can be a tough team to catch."

You can say that again. To say Hillsborough is on a tear would be an understatement. It has picked up right where it left off from last year, when it lost its first game before ripping off eight in a row en route to the title. Hillsborough has been even more dominant this season, winning its first four games by a combined score of 48-5 — and no, that's not a typo.

Foster City, last year's finalist, was supposed to offer more resistance, but it was overwhelmed by the Hillsborough juggernaut. The game was shortened due to the mercy rule. Hillsborough starter Grant Goodman threw the second no-hitter of his career, walking two and striking out seven. He set the tone early with a nifty catch off a line drive from Foster City leadoff hitter Stephan Ostrowski, whose ball almost took Goodman's head off. Goodman then struck out five of his next six batters, including four in a row at one point.

Hillsborough wasted no time when it got up to the plate in the bottom of the first inning. Henry Caruso, Austin Marcus and Chris Mark all singled to load the bases, and Frankie Ferrari followed by hitting the first pitch he saw to center field for a grand slam and 4-0 lead.

Goodman helped his own cause with a towering two-run homer in the second, and Ferrari capped the inning with a RBI double down the left-field line. Up 7-0, Hillsborough buried Foster City with a six-run third. Caruso and Goodman walked with one out before Mark belted an absolute moon shot to dead-center that bounced off the pole with the American flag on it.

It was the first of four straight hits for Hillsborough, which racked up 13 in all. Ferrari and Brendan Barrows followed with singles, before Will Reilly stroked a run-scoring single to make it 11-0. Barrows and Reilly later scored on wild pitches to account for the game's final runs.

Once again, Hillsborough was flawless in the field, and its vast experience at the Little League level — all but two of the players have played together for the last three years — shows in so many ways, starting with its mental approach to the game.

"We just played our game," said third baseman Ferrari, who went 3-for-3 and had five RBIs. "We played clean defense, and we usually hit. We never look ahead and it's pretty nice to have great team chemistry. We're like brothers. When a guy hits a home run no one gets jealous or too excited. When I hit my home run I didn't really look."

That's because Ferrari is too busy scooting furiously around the bases just in case his ball drops inside the fences. Goodman was pretty nonchalant about his no-hitter, speaking volumes of his level head and the team's in general. Goodman said the most important thing was he was able to get back on track after "struggling" in his last couple of outings.

"I was able to throw all of my pitches and hit my spots today," he said. "Everything was working. The last couple of times I haven't pitched well, so I was happy that things worked out."

Things are working out and then some for Hillsborough, which has a Little League version of a murder's row with the first five hitters in its lineup. Caruso, Goodman, Marcus, Mark and Ferrari all have the potential to hit one deep on a moment's notice.

"Our kids are talented but they work extremely hard," Cozad said. "They're a feisty group. The first day of practice they came out and hit the ground running. They know the team culture. Experience really does help. They've played 40 games together at the All-Star level. Last year's experience really helped this team. At one point we played games six days in a row, and every one of them was a do or die situation. These kids know how to win."

Of that, there is no doubt.



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