

FEATURED

## Hillsborough 10-11s glide to Section 3 finals

By Terry Bernal Daily Journal Staff Jul 10, 2017



With one mighty swing of the bat by Whitaker Tollmann, Hillsborough powered its way into the championship game of the Section 3 Little League 10-11s All-Star Tournament.

A prototypical leadoff hitter who has batted in the No. 9 spot through All-Star play, Tollmann entered play Sunday having not hit a home run in an official game in over a year. But that streak ended in Hillsborough's 5-2 victory over Union City in the winners' bracket semifinals at Hillsborough Majors Field.

Tollmann admits the power game is not his specialty. He totaled zero home runs during the Hillsborough Little League regular season. He didn't go deep in last year's District 52 9-10s tournament. Instead Tollmann stays true to the on-base virtues.

"Easy base hits, line drives and beat out some groundballs," Tollmann said of his specialties at the plate.

Stepping to the plate in the third inning amid a 1-1 tie with the bases loaded against Union City though, Tollmann connected with a high fastball and sent a booming opposite-field drive well over the right-center field fence for a grand slam home run — the first grand slam he has ever hit in a competitive baseball game.

“I was like, ‘Oh yeah! I hit a home run for my team,’” Tollmann said. “And it was a grand slam. So I was like, ‘Let’s go!’”

The 5-1 lead was more than enough for Hillsborough reliever Tyler Spitzer-Wu to work with. The right-hander entered in the top of the third in relief of starting pitcher Dylan Kall, working deep into the sixth and final inning to earn the in through three innings.

Now, Hillsborough manager Doug Robbins has his pitching staff lined up nicely for championship play beginning Tuesday at Hillsborough Majors Field at 5:30 p.m. Kall, having thrown 51 pitches Sunday, is the only Hillsborough pitcher unavailable to throw Tuesday.

“This is where, obviously, you want to be,” Doug Robbins said of advancing to the title game through the winners’ bracket, meaning Hillsborough needs just one more win to claim the title, but must be defeated twice. “But we still have to win one more game.”

While Hillsborough’s power came from an unlikely source Sunday, the team has been powering the ball plenty. In Saturday’s 10-3 win over San Ramon in the Section 3 tourney opener, Kall went yard twice, running his total between District 52 and section play to seven home runs.

Kall’s first homer Saturday was a booming two-run shot amid a strong Hillsborough statement to open the tourney, with the first five hitters in the lineup logging hits. Jumping out to a 5-0 lead in the first, starting pitcher Thomas Egbert took advantage of the early cushion, working 2 2/3 innings to earn the win.

“You’ve still got to get 18 outs but it’s much more comfortable when you’re up early,” Doug Robbins said.

Sunday’s matchup was much more tense through the early going.

Union City jumped on top in the top of the first, totaling three hits in the frame, including an RBI single by Iomar Jimenez to take a 1-0 lead.

Hillsborough answered back in the bottom of the inning though. After Kall slashed a one-out single to left, Conrad Wilbur switched places with him on a fielder's choice. Then with two outs, cleanup hitter Kevin Macy drilled an RBI double to right-center; Union City center fielder Calen Morgan nearly made an all-out running catch but had the ball clip off the webbing of his glove, allowing Wilbur to score all the way from first to tie it 1-1.

On the mound, Kall went on to strike out four through 2 2/3 innings. Spitzer-Wu struck out three, yielding one unearned run in the fifth. In the sixth, he was one pitch away from closing out the game, but a two-out, two-strike hit batsman caused Dough Robbins to go to reliever Nathan Balch for the final out of the game.

Doug Robbins was keen to highlight Hillsborough's two-out hitting in the game. All five of the team's runs scored with two outs. The first-year All-Star manager also made a point of saying he wasn't surprised by Tollmann's show of power in the third inning, something he showed on the defensive side of the ball in the District 52 tournament.

In the second game of the tourney, Tollmann produced an outfield assist for the final out of the game June 25 in a contentious 6-5 win of San Mateo National. With the tying run looking to score from second base on a sharp one-hop single to center, Tollmann showed off his hammer arm with a throw received by catcher William

Robbins on the fly. The throw got to the plate so quickly the runner stopped midway between third base and home with William Robbins running him down for the game's final out.

"The point we try to make is [Tollmann] is a strong kid," Doug Robbins said. "He's a mighty mite."

Hillsborough 9-10s also into championship round

The Hillsborough 9-10s All-Stars also swept through the winners' bracket in two games to advance to the Section 3 championship round.

After an 11-0 win Saturday over Union City, Hillsborough continued rolling with a 7-1 win over Tassajaro Valley Sunday at Ashland Little League Field in San Lorenzo.

Cleanup hitter Beau Schaffer paced Hillsborough Sunday with three hits, while he and Anakin Manuel totaled two RBIs apiece.

Hillsborough will play for the section title Tuesday at Ashland LL Field at 6 p.m., needing to be defeated twice. If necessary, championship play would conclude Wednesday at 6 p.m.