

FEATURED

San Ramon tops Hillsborough to force Section 3 10-11s showdown

By Terry Bernal Daily Journal Staff Jul 12, 2017 Updated 19 hrs ago



And so Hillsborough will reset and try it again Wednesday.

Having advanced through the winners' bracket of the Section 3 Little League 10-11s All-Star Tournament, Hillsborough had a game to give in the championship round. That game went to San Ramon Tuesday night at Hillsborough Majors Field, as the District 57 champs rallied in their final at-bat to top Hillsborough 5-3.

Now, the two teams will rematch for all the marbles in the battle for the Section 3 banner, meeting Wednesday at Hillsborough Majors Field at 5:30 p.m.

And now, Hillsborough's outlook on Tuesday's loss and Wednesday's winner-take-all championship finale is a simple one.

"Like this never happened," Hillsborough's Conrad Wilbur said of Tuesday's loss. "[Wednesday] is the only championship game."

For San Ramon, it has been a grueling ride through the Section 3 bracket since falling to Hillsborough Saturday in the tourney opener. Wednesday will mark San Ramon's fifth game in five days. They preserved their opening-day starter Lance Sapida, a lanky right-hander with good zip on his fastball, who threw 1 2/3 innings Tuesday, but stayed under the 20-pitch cap to allow him to pitch again Wednesday.

"To be honest, we have seven [pitchers] and I don't think we have an ace," San Ramon manager Dylan Vaughan said. "We have a luxurious roster right now."

Hillsborough is set to counter with left-hander Dylan Kall. Not only is Kall one of Hillsborough's most dominant arms, he has also been the hottest bat in the Section 3 tourney. He was 1 for 2 with a double into the right-field corner Tuesday.

But the one out Kall made was one of the many ways in which the ball just wasn't falling Hillsborough's way.

In the third inning, with Hillsborough trailing 1-0, Kall stepped to the plate after a Dean Dellosso single. Kall roped a line drive that again looked ticketed for the right-field corner but instead San Ramon first baseman Dylan Lee snagged it and beat Dellosso back to the bag for a double play.

It was the first of two double plays San Ramon turned in the game. Both likely prevented runs from scoring. And the second one was even more pivotal.

In the bottom of the fifth inning, Hillsborough rallied back from a two-run deficit to tie it 3-3. But with Hillsborough poised to take to the lead with the bases loaded and one out, San Ramon came up with a game-changing twin killing. On a soft liner over the pitcher, second baseman Quentin Quizon dove onto the infield grass for the catch then sprung to his feet to tag second base ahead of the runner's return for an inning-ending double play.

Then Quizon gave his team the lead in the top of the sixth with the most clutch at-bat of the evening. With two San Ramon runners on and two outs, Quizon locked up with Hillsborough relief pitcher Nathan Balch, fresh into the game, after 5 2/3 solid innings from starting pitcher Thomas Egbert. Then Quizon, San Ramon's leadoff man, ran the count to 3-2 and heightened the drama by fouling off several pitches.

"He's the best two-strike hitter we've had all season long," Vaughan said. "He's hitting leadoff for a reason."

Quizon — who San Ramon simply refers to as “Q” — won the day, ripping an RBI single to center to give his team the lead.

“Tip your hat to the guy,” Hillsborough manager Doug Robbins said. “He hit a solid line drive in a clutch spot.”

Nick Fasshauer followed with a RBI single to give San Ramon an insurance run. But relief pitcher Miles Roque pitched through a leadoff walk, setting down the next three batters in over to end it, earning the win through 1 1/3 innings of work.

Hillsborough showed a lot of spunk though. Trailing 1-0 in the fourth, Hillsborough got on the board in style when Wilbur socked a solo home run to center to tie it 1-1.

San Ramon answered with two runs in the fifth, but Hillsborough answered right back again as, with the bases loaded, Wilbur drew a walk and Kevin Macy got hit by a pitch, tying it 5-5. Wilbur settled for the walk, but was looking for a pitch to drive, fouling off several two-strike offerings he knew were off the plate just to get a chance to go large.

“I kept swinging at outside ball,” Wilbur said. “I could have walked much easier. But it worked out.”

Robbins said he was optimistic his team could rally for another comeback in the bottom of the sixth.

“They have done it a few times already,” Doug Robbins said. “They’ve come back before. So, I was confident down to that last inning. I thought we had a chance.”

Now, Hillsborough will just have to reset and try it again Wednesday.