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## Foster City, Hillsborough to play for all the marbles on Saturday

July 11, 2009, 12:00 AM By Emanuel Lee, Daily Journal Staff

The comeback kids are a win away from completing an improbable run in the Little League District 52 9-10-year-old All-Star tournament.

Hillsborough, which entered Friday's championship round having won its last two games in its last at-bat, pulled out some more heroics in topping Foster City 13-8 at Palo Alto's Middlefield Ballpark. The victory forces a winner-take-all game Saturday at 1 p.m.

After losing to Foster City 6-5 in a winner's bracket semifinal last Sunday, Hillsborough outslugged Palo Alto National 15-10 before edging Half Moon Bay 5-4 and Belmont-Redwood Shores 1-0 to advance to the championship round. So it's only fitting now that the title will come down to Foster City and Hillsborough in what basically amounts to a best-of-three series.

Friday's contest wasn't exactly a masterpiece, as it took nearly three hours to complete. A total of nine pitchers combined to issue 17 walks to go along with three hit batters.

"It was not pretty," Hillsborough coach Gary Goodman said. "But our boys showed a lot of intestinal fortitude."

Along with no fear. With 9 and 10 year olds, nerves are always a part of the equation in pressure-packed situations. However, Hillsborough's players seemingly have ice water in their veins. When Foster City scored seven runs in the top of the fifth inning to take its first and only lead, 8-6, Hillsborough answered right back with seven runs of its own in the bottom half to leave no doubt.

"(The seven runs we gave up) didn't bother the kids at all," Goodman said. "Our kids don't feel the pressure because they're having fun and they've practiced the game seriously to the point where they know what to do almost automatically. I think both sides had pitching problems, and a lot of it has to do with being this late in the tournament. But (Saturday) we'll be fully loaded and ready to go."

Hillsborough had 13 hits to Foster City's six. And it looked as if it was going to cruise to the victory, up 6-1 after four. But Foster City — which showed some resiliency of its own throughout the tournament — came roaring back with a seven-run fifth. Foster City brought 13 hitters to the plate during the uprising and managed all of two hits, but inflicted some major damage courtesy of three run-scoring walks.

The other runs came off RBI singles from R.J. Teijeiro and Joe Veglak, a fielder's choice and another run was forced in when Taiki Matsuda got hit by a pitch. When the inning was done, Foster City led 8-6. But the advantage was short-lived. Hillsborough came roaring back with a seven spot of its own.

Henry James reached on an error leading off before Hillsborough racked up three consecutive hits off the bats of Hayden Pegley, Michael Adams (double) and Miles Todzo (single). Adams and Todzo's hits scored a run each, making it 8-8. Gray Goodman then drew a walk to load the bases and two batters later, Dylan Goldman drew a run-scoring walk to give Hillsborough the lead for good.

A fielder's choice and Foster City error — one of two for the game — led to two more Hillsborough runs, and Will Lambson and James added a run-scoring double and single, respectively. Even when Foster City took the lead, coach Mike Teijeiro knew it wasn't safe.

"I wasn't comfortable at all," he said. "Hillsborough is a team that can hit. Our pitchers got behind in the count and when you have to come in to a good hitting team, they will make you pay. We're going to have our hands full (Saturday), but we had the luxury (as the team from the winner's bracket and having played two less games than Hillsborough) to arrange our pitching (for a winner-take-all game). Now it's turned into a championship series. I think we'll have a decent shot at it."

Foster City cost itself from the get-go, loading the bases with one out in the first. But it came away empty-handed as Hillsborough turned in an inning-ending double play. The sequence proved pivotal as Hillsborough scored three times in the bottom half, as Ben Somorjai drove in one of his game-high three runs via a groundout for Hillsborough's second run.

Adams and Todzo led Hillsborough's offensive onslaught with three hits apiece, while Justin Moore and Pegley added two hits each. Teijeiro led Foster City with two singles.

If there's any such thing as momentum carrying over into the next day, then the advantage obviously goes to Hillsborough. But Foster City has shown an ability to rise to the occasion, too. Both coaches said they have their top pitchers available to go.

"I'm pretty confident with the guys we're going to roll out," Teijeiro said.

"We have pretty much everyone ready to go," Goodman said. "Talk about luck, huh? Normally we throw strikes, but in this game we obviously didn't. It happens with 9 and 10 year olds. But we didn't make an error, we make all our cuts and we hold runners, and that's why these kids are doing so well."

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