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## San Mateo American brings home District 52 All-Stars 10-11s title

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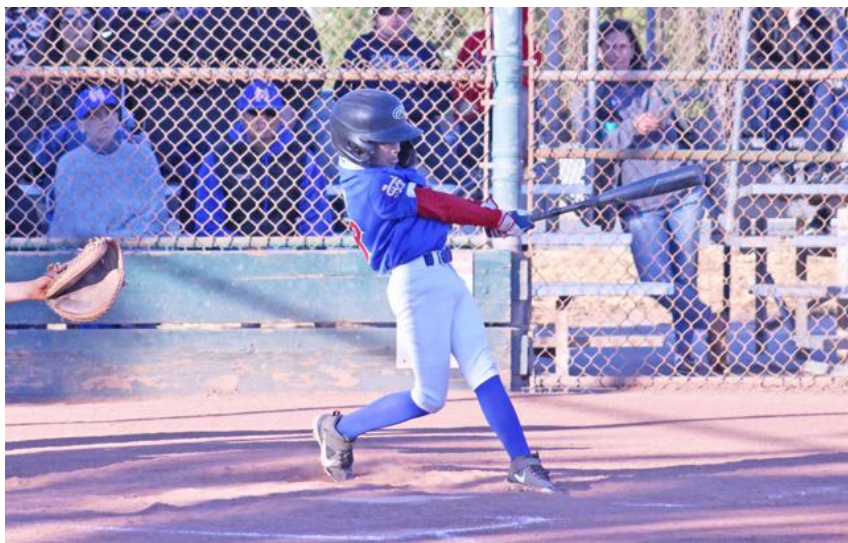


It was like that Phil Collins song “In the Air Tonight.” And the San Mateo American bats were the drum solo.

American rallied for a remarkable comeback in the District 52 Little League All-Stars 10-11s Tournament championship game, scoring eight times in the top of the sixth Thursday night at Lakeside Park to stun Hillsborough with a 9-6 victory.

While American, advancing in the tournament through the winner’s bracket, had a game to give — meaning Hillsborough would have needed to win another game to take the title — the firepower of American’s offense 1 through 9 would not be denied. No. 9 hitter Nick Loew tied it with a sacrifice fly and leadoff hitter Max Yeh delivered an RBI double to power the march toward the 10-11s championship banner.

“Yeah, this ranks up there with some of the Little League games I’ve played in because we were down so much,” San Mateo American manager Paul Witten said.



San Mateo American’s Max Yeh produces a go-ahead double in the sixth inning of Thursday’s District 52 Little League All-Stars 10-11s Tournament championship game.

American's offense was tacit through the first five innings as Hillsborough starting pitcher Charlie Chesnosky found his groove. The right-hander worked five-plus innings, allowing just two balls out of the infield through the opening five frames.

But after he allowed back-to-back singles to Landon King and William Folau to open the sixth, he reached the 85-pitch maximum limit, forcing Hillsborough — playing its fifth game in the tournament after getting knocked into the elimination bracket Tuesday by American — to go to its bullpen.

“It would have been nice if Charlie would have had a few more bullets left,” Hillsborough manager Mike Chesnosky said. “But, hey, that’s kind of the way things go, and it is what it is. And, when you’ve got to come back and play day to day, you don’t have as many guys available with the pitch counts and everything. So, we were definitely a little short on pitchers tonight.”

Not that Charlie Chesnosky's groove came easy. The right-hander admitted to some serious butterflies upon taking the mound in the first inning. But some sage advice served him well through the first inning as he surrendered a run with back-to-back wild pitches to plate Seanan Young.

“I kind of settled in after the first inning,” Charlie Chesnosky said. “My mom, she tells me to count to 10 and to take deep breaths when I’m feeling nervous.”

How many times did Charlie Chesnosky count to 10 Thursday?

“Like 50 times,” he said.

But Hillsborough's offense did well to help settle its pitcher down in the bottom of the first, rallying for five runs. Leadoff hitter Colt Crawford got the line moving by jumping on the first pitch of the inning and driving it to the center field wall for a double.

After Charlie Chesnosky reached on a strikeout-passed ball, Ryan Duffell made it hurt with a line-drive RBI single back through the box. Dominic Barulich then floated a popup into no man's land between third base and the pitcher for a single to load the bases. Scotty Cornelius followed with an RBI single. Pat Bala knocked home a run with an RBI fielder's choice. Bala later scored on an double steal to give Hillsborough a 5-1 lead.



Did somebody say: 'Call New York?' Hillsborough base-runner Pat Bala craftily evades the tag of San Mateo American catcher Jake McGee to steal home in the first inning.

"In the first inning I just thought we were doing well and that would carry on throughout the game," Crawford said. "We started out well. But later we never got any more runs. Then at the end there were just a lot of errors and things didn't go our way."

Hillsborough had its chances and went on to strand nine runners on base in the game.

But Crawford at second base, and Cornelius at shortstop worked in tandem with their pitcher's shutdown stuff by showing off some clutch defense. Crawford did well in the third inning to get his glove in front of a two-hop smash off the bat of left-hander slugger Landon King. It took some guts, but Crawford kept his glove down and his nose in the play to knock down the ball, gather, and throw to first.

Cornelius then opened the fifth inning by charging a high, hard chopper off the bat of Evan Gilbert. Cornelius was forced to commit to a difficult olé play, but picked it clean with a swipe of the glove and made a graceful throw off his back foot to shoot down Gilbert.

But it was a diving attempt in the sixth inning by right fielder Jack Rowbotham that changed the course of the final inning. Make no mistake, it would have been a miraculous catch. With a run in, two runners on, and Hillsborough clinging to a 5-2 lead, Jake McGee sent a fading looper to shallow right. Rowbotham got a good jump on the ball, laid out with a head-first dive, and got a glove on the ball; but it rattled around in the webbing and popped out to give McGee an RBI single.

"It was a great effort," Mike Chesnosky said. "And I love kids that come out and play like that and play hard."

Dylan Erlandson followed with a walk, and Gilbert drove home a run with an RBI fielder's choice to make it 5-4. Then Loew stepped to the plate and swung at a two-strike pitch that was over his head but lifted it to left field for a sacrifice fly to score McGee.

Loew said he spent the previous day hitting high pitches during a batting practice session in his backyard. This was the product of him swinging and missing at two high offerings in American's Tuesday win over Hillsborough.

“So, I was practicing hitting the high ones,” Loew said.

As for chasing a ball that was above his eyeline?

“It was a little bit higher than I was practicing, but, yeah,” Loew said.

After Yeh — who was 3 for 3 on the night — cranked an RBI double over the third-base bag to score Loew with the go-ahead run, Young singled and King drove home Yeh with an infield hit to make it 7-5. Then with runners at second and third, Hillsborough threw a wild pitch to score not only Young, but to score King as well as he rounded third base hard and just kept going.

“He’s got those instincts,” Witten said. “We work on stuff like that but that was all him. When he recognized that they couldn’t find the ball, he just never stopped his motor.”

Yeh then marched out to pitch the bottom of the sixth. He had to go through the heart of the Hillsborough batting order and yielded a run on an RBI single by Bala.

“I knew I could come in and lock it down,” Yeh said. “Even though they had the middle of their order up, those guys are really good, I knew I could lock it down.”

And the right-hander did just that, finishing off the championship victory by inducing a fly ball to Gilbert in center field, who gloved it to set off a celebrating in the middle of the diamond.

“It had been such a long journey, first through Little League and then All-Stars, practicing every day, once he caught that and it finally over, now we can move on,” Yeh said.

San Mateo American now advances to the Section 3 Tournament in Danville. The four-team, double-elimination bracket opens July 17 with American taking on the champion from District 57. First pitch at Osage Park is scheduled for 2 p.m.

