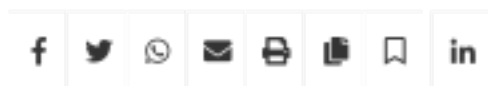


https://www.smdailyjournal.com/sports/local/hillsborough-runs-into-buzz-saw-in-section-3-12s-tourney/article_823303c6-2476-11ee-b78f-d350aaaec253.html

FEATURED

Hillsborough runs into buzz-saw in Section 3 12s tourney

Terry Bernal Daily Journal staff
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FREMONT — The Hillsborough All-Stars have their work cut out for them after falling to the elimination bracket in the Section 3 Little League 12s tournament.

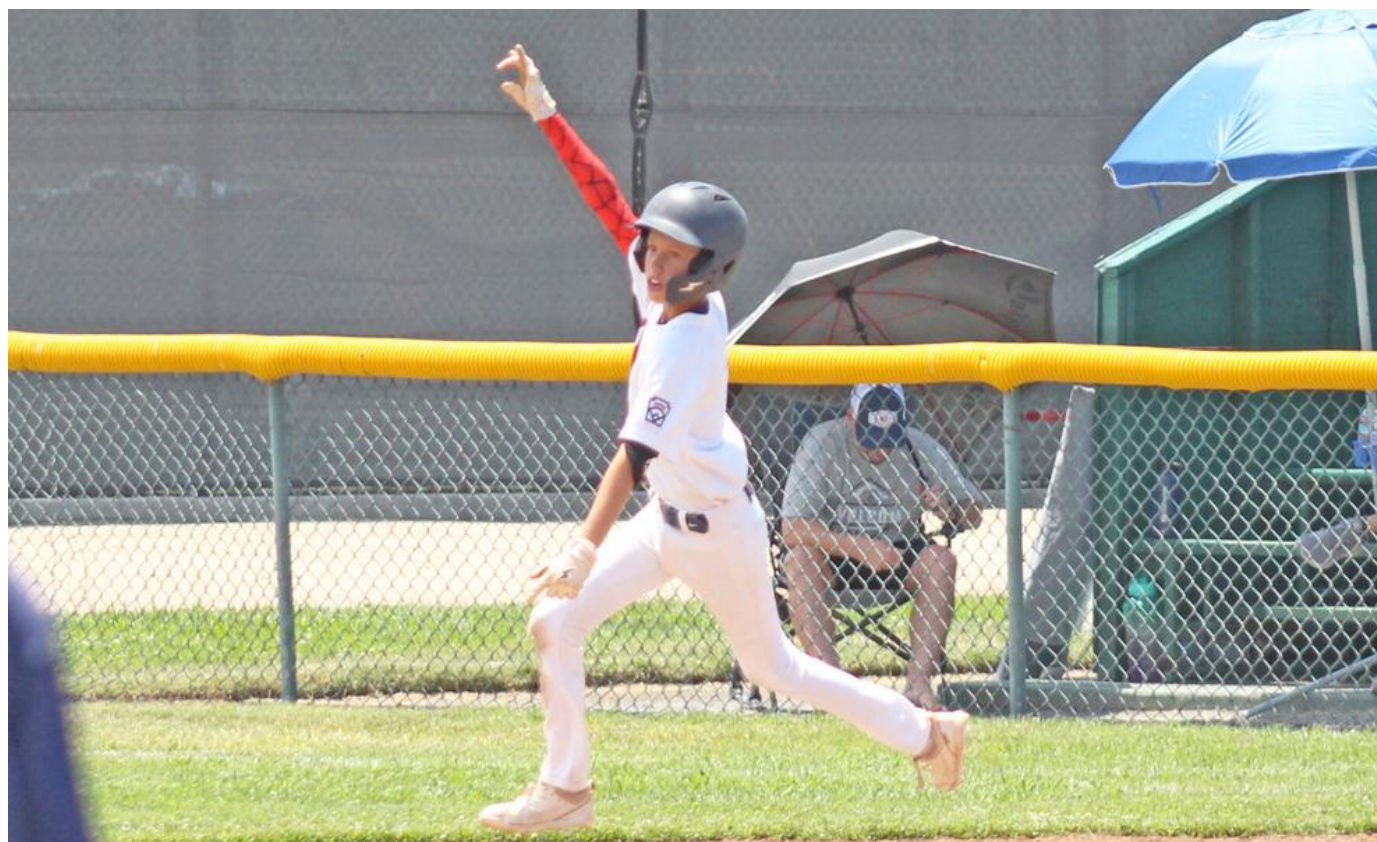
After winning Saturday’s opener at Marshall Park in Fremont of the four-team, double-elimination tournament, 5-2 over Fremont Centerville Little League, Hillsborough dropped the second game 4-1 to Bollinger Canyon.

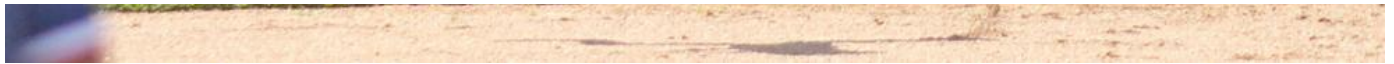
It's hard to imagine Bollinger Canyon getting any better after Sunday's starting pitcher Jay Murai shut down Hillsborough, going the distance while allowing one run on three hits and striking out 10. With the win, Bollinger Canyon advances to Tuesday's championship round, where the team from San Ramon expects to see one of its best players, shortstop Brandon Manivong, return from playing travel ball at the Perfect Game Invitational National Championship in Mississippi.

"We knew [Murai] could throw a lot of strikes," Hillsborough manager John Gall said. "He throws hard, he throws a bunch of strikes. And our kids have hit that ... but he really filled up the zone and just did a great job against our hitters."

After falling behind 2-0 in the third, Hillsborough seemed rejuvenated in the top of the fourth when a solo home run by Johnny Gall cut the lead in half.

Johnny Gall was sporting a brand new elbow sleeve on his throwing arm with a cool Spider-Man insignia, and he seemed to derive super-human strength in his first game wearing it. Hillsborough's leadoff man had never hit a regulation home run at any level of baseball, even in the regular season, but his booming shot down the left field line cleared the outfield fence by plenty.





Hillsborough's Johnny Gall rounds the bases after hitting a solo home run in the fourth inning Sunday in Fremont.

Terry Bernal/Daily Journal

Murai responded by setting down the next five batters he faced, Hillsborough's No. 2 through 5 hitters, without allowing a ball out of the infield.

"I was just impressed he kept his cool," John Gall said, "and didn't walk the next batter, and just kept throwing strikes. In a one-run game at that point, we felt pretty good ... where we were in the lineup, but we just couldn't push any runs across when we got runners on base today."

Bollinger Canyon scratched out single runs in the second and third innings against Hillsborough starting pitcher Cole Callen.

The right-hander was on the verge of pitching through trouble in the second. After a leadoff single by Sammy Alikian and a full-count walk to Evan Phinney, Callen got the first out on a bunt by throwing out the lead runner at third, then struck out the next batter for the second out. Callen then got ahead of Tucker Klatt with a 1-2 count, but got snake bit by Klatt's RBI double up the left-center gap to put Bollinger Canyon on the board.

In the Bollinger Canyon third, Drew Obara led off the frame with a single to center. Obara moved to second on a wild pitch, which loomed large when Kenji Bradley grounded to second base, moving Obara to third. Dylan Crawford followed with a sacrifice fly to center to make it 2-0.

Then, in the bottom of the fourth, Bollinger Canyon responded to Hillsborough's home run with a two-run rally, as Alikiani and Phinney led off with back-to-back singles, and Ghazi Hussain followed with a two-run single to deep right field to put Bollinger Canyon up 4-1. It could have been worse, but Hillsborough right fielder Tayden Flores threw out Hussein attempting to advance to second with a rocket throw on the bag to shortstop Johnny Gall.

"[Flores] has had an incredible season in the outfield," John Gall said. "That was

again him to Johnny (Gall), who made the tag on him at second. The big one in the [championship game of the District 52] tournament was him to Johnny when (Johnny) was playing catcher. ... But Tayden, he's baseball player. He's a kid that knows how to play the game, and he's fun. He's the smallest kid on the team and he can sneak up on you because he's such a good kid and ballplayer."

Hillsborough had a chance to make some noise in the sixth when Noah Edling got hit by a pitch to start the inning, and Parker Perotti followed with a single to bring the tying run to the plate. Murai bounced back with back-to-back strikeouts, though, with the first one turning into a double play when Bollinger Canyon catcher Mikey Wong made a rocket throw of his own to back pick the runner at second.

The complete game was significant for Murai, who pitched 5 2/3 innings in Bollinger Canyon's District 57 tournament championship win 3-1 over Livermore. Murai had to be removed from that game due to reaching the maximum pitch count.

"Awesome," Bollinger Canyon manager Phil Wong said of Murai's performance Sunday. "It just shows how much improvement he's making from game to game."

Hillsborough now moves to the final game of the elimination bracket for a rematch with Fremont Centerville, Monday at 5:30 p.m. The winner of that game advances to Tuesday's championship round, where Bollinger Canyon would need be defeated twice to be denied the title.

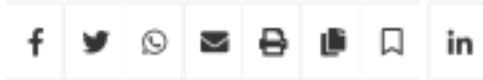
Hillsborough has its ace, right-hander Robert Ramirez, available to pitch. Ramirez started Saturday's opener, but stayed under the 20-pitch limit, allowing him to pitch again with no days off.

"We will see," John Gall said of how he will use his pitching staff going forward, now needing to win three games in three days. "I think that's one of the complicated things is a four-team, quick tournament is figuring out who's going when. ... So, there's a little more juggling now, knowing we've got three games ahead of us if we were to get through this."

Hillsborough 10s win two straight

In the Section 3 Little League All-Stars 10s tournament, Hillsborough advanced to the championship round with two straight wins — defeating Castro Valley 11-0 in Saturday’s opener, and taking down Newark 5-1 Sunday.

Hills will now take on the winner of Monday’s elimination game between Dublin and Newark. Tuesday’s game at Diablo Vista Park in Danville is scheduled for a 5 p.m. first pitch.



Terry Bernal, Daily Journal staff