

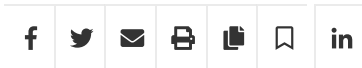
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Brutal end to Hillsborough's run in Section 3 10s tourney

Nathan Mollat Daily Journal staff

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DUBLIN — The Hillsborough 10 All-Stars team thought it had everything lined up for it to celebrate a Section 3 championship to go with its District 52 title. It had its ace on the mound and an offense that had scored 23 runs through four games.

“When we came in (to Wednesday’s game), we thought it would be enough,” said Hills manager Chase Rowbotham.

And Hills had its chances against Dublin in the winner-take-all finale, leading 3-1 after 4 ½ innings and 6-3 after 7 1/2.

But Hills could not put its opponent away. Dublin rallied twice, the second being the decisive rally in extra innings as it scored four runs in the bottom of the eighth to pull out a 7-6, walk-off win at the Fallon Sports Park in Dublin.

And it was a walk-off in the truest sense of the word. With the bases loaded and two outs, Dublin’s Aki Lee drew a walk to plate the winning-run in Jackson Lemmo, who also picked up the win on the mound.

“Tough one,” Rowbotham said. “(I thought we had it) when we were up 6-3 (in the top of the eighth). But that’s 10s Little League baseball.”

It was a brutal end to a Hills run that saw it win eight of 11 games in the district and section tournament. As the winner of the winner’s bracket, Hills needed to be beaten twice to be denied the title. Dublin forced the “if necessary” game following a 9-7 win Tuesday.

Other than a 2-0 win over Castro Valley, Dublin had no trouble scoring runs throughout the tournament, either. It scored 11 in a 17-11, first-round loss to Newark. But beat Castro Valley and then got over Newark 7-6 in the losers’ bracket final.

Despite all those runs, the game evolved into a pitcher’s



Hillsborough third baseman Colton Kung fields a slow chopper and throws out the Dublin runner at first.

Nathan Mollat/Daily Journal

duel. Hills took a quick 2-0 lead in the top of the first when Colton Kung drew a bases-loaded walk to drive in Finn Rowbotham and Gianni Marrone singled home Will DeMartini, forcing Dublin starter Caleb Brown to throw 45 of his allotted 75 pitches as the Dublin defense committed a pair of errors.

But Hills left the bases loaded and it would be a recurring theme.

“I’d have to look at it, but it felt like we had runners on first and second, or bases loaded, all game long,” Rowbotham said. “We just left so many opportunities (on the bases). That’s the difference.”

Finn Rowbotham took the mound for Hills in the bottom of the first and quickly got the first two outs on just three pitches. But in a foreshadowing of things to come, Dublin rallied. A two-base throwing error put Dublin’s Petie Kollar on second. After a Jonah Behney infield hit, Grant Ferraro cut the deficit in half with an RBI infield hit.

Both pitchers settled down after that. Hills put together a two-out threat in the top of the second, with Jack Veach singling and Will Duffell cracking a double deep to right.

As the ball was relayed back to the infield, Veach initially stopped halfway between third and home before breaking, again, for the plate.

In a bang-bang play, Veach was called out to end the inning.

But Finn Rowbotham grabbed the momentum back from Dublin right away, retiring the side in order in the bottom of the second, striking out the final two batters of the inning.

“That was huge,” Chase Rowbotham said.

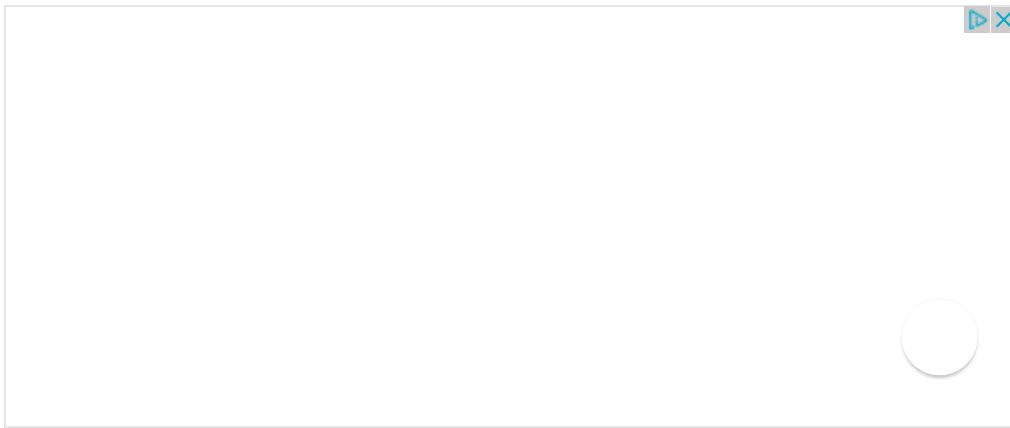
Finn Rowbotham would go on to pitch $5 \frac{2}{3}$ innings strong, allowing three runs, only one earned, on six hits and striking out six before being lifted in the bottom of the sixth with two outs and at his 75-pitch limit.

“He’s warrior for us,” Chase Rowbotham said. “He did what he needed to do.”

After that rough first inning, Brown settled down for Dublin, allowing two runs, neither earned, on four hits before being relieved in the top of the third by Devin Chokshi.

Chokshi was even tougher, allowing one unearned run on one hit in 3 1/3 innings. Hills scratched out what turned out to be a big insurance run in the top of the fifth when Duffell stroked a one-out single, Finn Rowbotham and Will Cantwell reaching via errors to load the bases, and Kung drawing his second RBI walk of the game to put Hills up 3-1.

But Dublin rallied back with two runs in the bottom of the inning to tie the game at 3. After an uneventful sixth inning, the game went into extra innings. In the top of the seventh, Mico DeMartini walked and Veach was hit by a pitch to lead off the inning. Dublin went to the bullpen and Lemmo got out of the jam, retiring the next three batters.



In the eighth, the game went to a tiebreaker, with a runner starting the inning at second. It changed the whole complexion of the game as both offenses came alive. In the top of the inning, Hills scored three runs on four hits. Kung put the Hills up 4-3 with his game-leading third RBI of the game with a single to center. Morrone followed with an RBI single to right and after a Jack Snethen double, Colton Kreuzkamp rapped out an RBI single to center to put Hills up 6-3.

But Dublin didn't quit and got right back into the game. Ferraro drilled a one-out, two-run double deep to left field to close the Hills lead to 6-5. Lemmo then tied the game with a single to left as well. An infield hit and an intentional walk loaded the bases before Lee ended things with a walk on a 3-1 pitch.

[Dublin was] incredibly resilient," Chase Rowbotham said. "They didn't quit.

“But I’m so proud of our guys.”



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