

Hillsborough 9-10 All-Stars to play for title

By Nathan Mollat Daily Journal Staff 2 hrs ago

Devin Saltzgaber was nearly unhittable and the offense gave him some breathing room late as the Hillsborough 9-10 All-Stars beat River Park 4-0 in the first game of the championship series at the Northern California state championship tournament in Yuba City Friday night.

“[Saltzgaber] pitched a gem,” said Hillsborough manager Ben Coughlin.

Because River Park was the winner’s bracket winner, it needs to be defeated twice to be denied the title. Hillsborough won its first two games of the tournament before suffering its first loss of the summer to River Park in the winner’s bracket final, 7-5.

Sent to the last-chance bracket, Hillsborough beat Maidu 11-7 in an elimination game Thursday to advance to the championship series.

“It was a tight game (Friday night). ... It felt like a very mature baseball game — not a lot of hits, great pitching,” Coughlin said.

Coughlin said the loss to River Park in the winner’s bracket final might have been beneficial during Friday’s night’s game. River Park scored six runs in the first inning Wednesday, but Hillsborough stabilized and made a game of it.

“That was the first game we were behind. We took the proverbial shot and hung in there. We were very proud of how we battled back,” Coughlin said. “We also figured out a pretty good game plan to pitch against their bats. That carried over to [Friday night] and Devin executed the game plan beautifully.”

It wasn’t all smooth sailing for Saltzgaber, who threw 5 1/3 innings, striking out 10 while allowing just one hit. In the top of the second with Hillsborough leading 1-0, River Park loaded the bases with one out on a pair of walks and throwing error. But Saltzgaber escaped the jam.

Saltzgaber worked into the sixth inning, getting one out, before Beau Schaffer came in to record the final two outs.

Schaffer also had a big game at the plate, drilling a pair of singles, drawing a pair of walks and driving in two runs — one in the first and one during Hillsborough's three-run fifth. Ryan Drake, Hillsborough's No. 2 hitter, added a hit and scored two runs.

Hillsborough and River Park will meet again at 7 p.m. tonight, with the winner taking the Nor Cal state title.

“Fifty percent was everybody felt great about winning the game (Friday night), but also 50 percent of, ‘Well, we have one more to go,’” Coughlin said. “The team recognizes one more game. We’ve worked so hard all summer to get this game.”