

Another banner year

Hillsborough 11-and-12-year-olds win District 52 championship

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If they keep winning banners, Hillsborough Little League coach Jeff Cozad might have to go grab a couple more players to hold them all up.

The Hillsborough 11-and-12-year-old All-Star team wrapped up a dominant run in the District 52 tournament Thursday, unleashing another marvelous display of offense during a 21-7 victory over Foster

LITTLE LEAGUE DISTRICT 52
11-AND-12-YEAR-OLD ALL-STAR CHAMPIONSHIP
■ HILLSBOROUGH 21
FOSTER CITY 7

City at Middlefield Park in Palo Alto.

The Hillsborough bunch added banner No. 5 to its lengthy list of accolades, as the champions lined up for photos across the outfield with the five banners held proudly by the smiling group of Little League champions.

This stacked group of Hillsborough stars has won three straight district titles, along with two sectional championships.

"This group has played 45-plus All-Star games together," Cozad said. "This is a very cohesive little group. They get the grind. They put in the hard work."

On a squad oozing with talent, Hillsborough's unassuming rock behind the plate Chris Mark supplied the fireworks.

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HILLSBOROUGH

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Mark hit two homers on the night, including a two-run shot to right field in the first inning signaling a long evening for Foster City.

Mark finished the night with a game high five RBIs to cap a torrid run through the District 52 tournament.

"He has been incredible all tournament," Cozad said. "This year has been the easiest run to the district title. Last year we lost the first game and had to come back and win eight straight games to win it."

Hillsborough scored twice in the first thanks to Mark, then added seven more runs in the second inning to jet out to a 9-0 advantage.

Nine runs was plenty for Hillsborough starter Henry Caruso.

Caruso pitched a complete game, striking out seven hitters on the night by using a diving curveball and an occasional knuckler during the victory.

"We enjoy every minute of it," Caruso said. "Our goal was to score as many runs as possible. We all believe in each other."

Mark capped off the seven-run second with a towering three-run homer to right field. The second blast for Mark landed at least 20 feet farther back than his first-inning bomb.

After Hillsborough padded its lead to nine in the top of the second, a four-inning mercy rule shorten game seemed all but certain. Foster City had other ideas.

The feisty Foster City bunch scored five runs in the second inning — the most runs put up on Hillsborough in the entire tournament.

Drew Botta put Foster City on the board with an RBI single to right field. A fielder's choice brought across Botta, then leadoff hitter Stephan Ostrowski kept the rally going with one big hack.

The hanging curve was dispatched to deep left field by Ostrowski, and the three-run shot pulled Foster City to within four runs, as Hillsborough led 9-5 after two.

"Foster City is a really good team," Cozad said. "We've seen them a lot over the past couple of years."



Neither side scored in the third inning, as a refocused Caruso didn't even let Foster City make contact. The big righty struck out the side in the third inning.

"Once I got that first strikeout, I got into a groove," Caruso said. "Everyone on the team can hit. It makes things a lot easier on the mound knowing we're going to score runs. Chris was unbelievable tonight."

Hillsborough placed three more scores on the board in the fourth frame, back-to-back solo homers by Frankie Ferrari and Will Reilly highlighted the inning.

Four of the five tournament victories came via the mercy rule for Hillsborough, and nine runs in the fifth inning secured the fourth mercy-rule win.

Grant Goodman, Brock Cozad, Greg Pratt and Austin Marcus were among several players to record RBIs during the lengthy fifth inning surge by the eventual champs.

Hillsborough took a 21-5 lead into the bottom of the fifth inning. Foster City grounded out two more runs, but ran out of gas as Hillsborough took home the title and the 5-inning 21-7 win.

"None of our pitchers have thrown more than six innings during the tournament," Cozad said. "Our arms will be fresh for the next round of play; that's a great thing to have."

Section 3 play begins next Wednesday in Tracy for the Hillsborough bunch that moved one step closer toward Williamsport on Thursday.

SPORTS

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YOUTH LEAGUE PLAYOFFS

