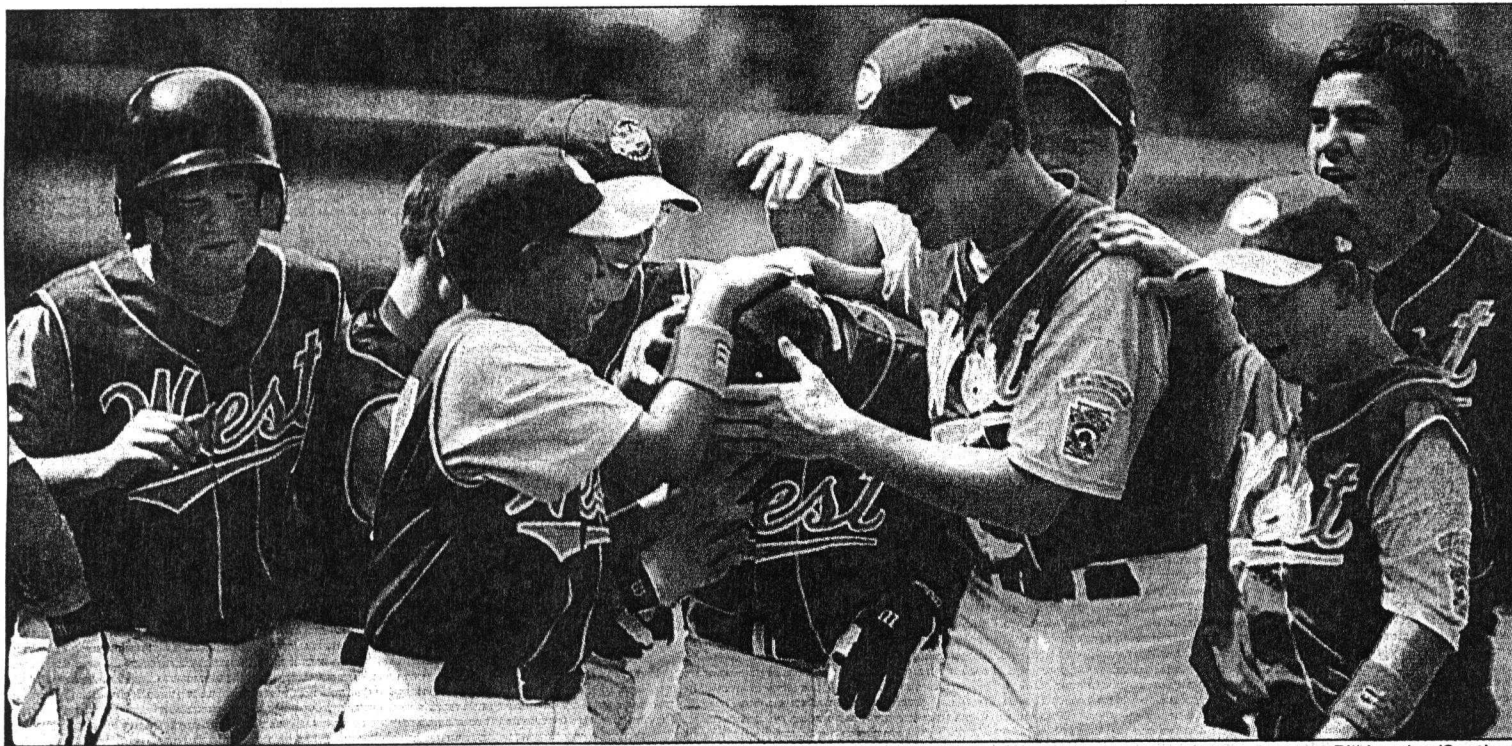


A true team effort

Several boys make key plays in thrilling rally; 11-8 win keeps Aptos in tournament contention



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Andrew Biancardi gets a group noogie from his teammates after his two-run homer put Aptos on top Sunday.

This is what it's all about

WILLIAMSPORT, Pa. — Aptos catcher Drew McCauley takes a foul tip square off his face mask. He leaves the game temporarily, returns a few innings later only to take another blow to his leg. He perseveres.



BOB LINNEMAN

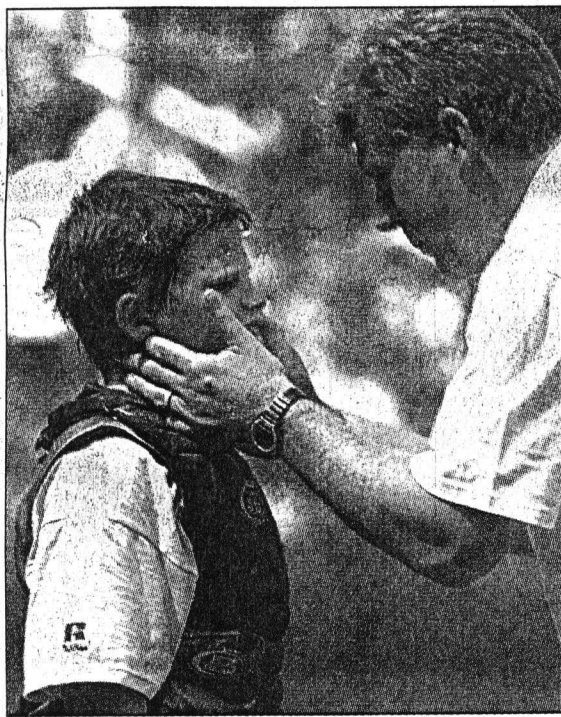
Brian Godoy, who pinch-ran and pinch-hit all in the fourth inning, delivers a dramatic grand slam to tie Sunday's game with Clemmons, N.C., 8-8, in each team's second game of the Little League World Series.

Andrew Biancardi, a short time later in the same inning, rips a two-run homer to give Aptos its first Little League World Series win and a chance to advance past pool play, which concludes

Tuesday against Harlem.

Tyler Raymond, he of the shot that put Aptos into the Little League World Series, comes on to pitch in relief of Kyle Anderson in the fifth and shuts down the team from North Carolina, blowing batters away with high, hard fastballs that produce five strikeouts among six outs.

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The Associated Press

Little League trainer Mike Ludwowski, right, examines the face of Aptos catcher Drew McCauley after he was hit in the mask by a foul ball in the third inning against Southwest Forsyth of Clemmons, N.C. McCauley was taken out of Sunday's game as a precaution, but he returned later in the game.

Firefighters rooting for home team

By RAMONA TURNER
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

APTOS — Many TV sets in town were tuned to the Aptos Little League All-Stars game Sunday, in which the boys in green and yellow beat Clemmons, N.C., on a stunning late rally.

But the excitement was possibly most palpable at firehouses throughout the Aptos/La Selva Fire Protection District, said Ryan Peters, a firefighter-paramedic.

"We have three people on duty at each station and all the stations were watching," he said. "Even those who were off-duty were calling in saying, 'Did you see that?'"

The firefighters' support goes beyond rooting for the team in front of the television — the firefighters union has donated about \$500 to the team's travel fund.

According to Peters, the highlight of the game was when Aptos was down by four runs and Brian Godoy hit a grand slam to tie the game in the fourth inning.

"The whole game was great," Peters said. "It's the hometown team, we have to support them. We don't care about Major League Baseball (and its plans to strike Aug. 30). We're going to watch Little League and enjoy it."

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Chasing the dream

The Sentinel is offering expanded coverage of the Aptos Little League All-Stars' pursuit of the Little League World Series championship in Williamsport, Pa. Games are part of a tournament featuring 16 teams of 11- and 12-year-old boys from the United States and eight other nations.

GAME SCHEDULE:

■ Tuesday, 1 p.m. PDT vs. Harlem, N.Y. (ESPN2).

MORE IN SPORTS

■ Timely power hitting keys Sunday's win for the Aptos All-Stars.

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■ Mark Conley's couch-side observations. Page B1

Linneman

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"These guys don't give up," Aptos manager Dave Anderson said. "It's the most amazing thing. They always believe."

Moments like these, where true heart wins out, is what the Little League World Series is all about. The thrilling moments just kept coming as Aptos battled Clemmons, N.C., the Southeast representative in the tournament.

Aptos showed its resilient side in securing an 11-8 win, and new life following Saturday's loss to Louisville.

"It really was a team effort," added Anderson, apologizing for using the cliché. "McCauley gets pounded, and he has a major headache, but he comes back. There is no one star on this team. Everyone is involved."

And afterward, as the players trotted from their barracks to meet with their families, the cheers went up again.

The Aptos rooting section has been badly out-cheered so far in this tournament, mostly because they just don't have the huge numbers of some other teams. The Southeast group's chant reverberated through Little League Volunteer Stadium for much of Sunday's game.

But after the fireworks in the fourth, when Aptos was mounting its huge comeback, what was once a faint "Aptos, Aptos, Aptos," roared into a symphony and the folks from North Carolina could not hang.

As it turned out, neither could their team. The scrappy Aptos squad scratched and clawed, and as Anderson said, even got

pounded on in this game. Nevertheless, they still managed to emerge smiling with a satisfying win and ready for one more game — at least.

While Godoy and Biancardi are the most visible heroes of this win, for their home runs were truly remarkable, it's McCauley who exemplifies what Little League Baseball, what sports, should be about.

"I felt I needed to help my team," McCauley said after the game, licking his various wounds. "I needed to go out there and do the best I could."

Besides, Tyler Raymond needed him behind the plate. They are used to each other and McCauley knows how to handle the hard-throwing, but sometimes wild Raymond, a big kid who hasn't quite managed to harness all his athletic tools yet.

It worked to perfection. North Carolina mounted one last dramatic threat in the sixth, bringing catcher Chris Sanders, who already had two homers on the day, to the plate representing the tying run. But Raymond mowed him down and Aptos had its win.

Even if the Santa Cruz County kids don't advance to the quarterfinals of this tournament with a win over Harlem, they will cherish this game for years to come.

It was a classic. A Little League classic. And everyone had a hand in it.

Bob Linneman is the Sentinel's assistant sports editor. Contact him at blinneman@santa-cruz.com. Send comments about Aptos' run to Williamsport@santa-cruz.com.