

Sports - Baseball

Stunning rally sends Aptos to World Series



Aptos catcher Drew McCauley fields a throw at home in the fifth inning, but not in time to prevent an Arizona runner from scoring. Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

3-run HR completes comeback

By JULIE JAG

SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

SAN BERNARDINO — Their win came as no surprise.

The first clue that the Aptos Little League All-Stars would win the Western Region Tournament championship Tuesday night was that it took the team fewer tries than its opponent to perfect the promo it was shooting for ESPN2.

Cool and collected, not nervously giddy as the Arrowhead team of Glendale, Ariz., appeared, the Aptos team rattled off the promo. In it they had to say, in unison, "Stay tuned, the Little League Western Region finals are next on ESPN2." It took them only three tries.

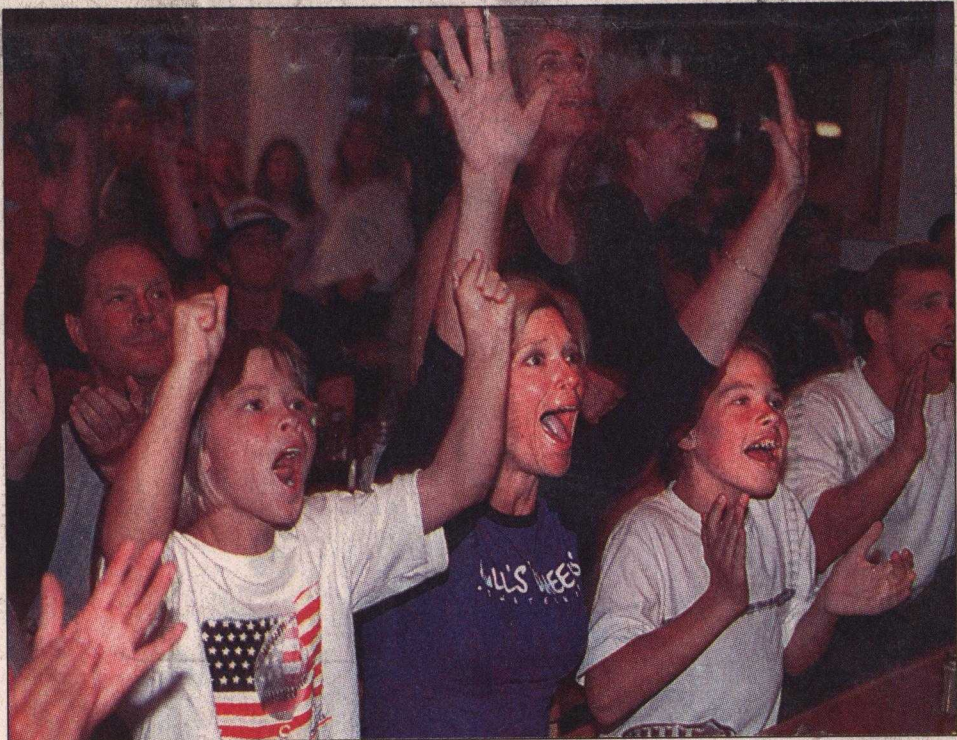
It only took them six innings to defeat Arizona, 4-3. The win, courtesy of a sixth-inning three-run homer by Tyler Raymond, gave Aptos and Santa Cruz County its first berth in the Little League World Series, which will be held in Williamsport, Pa., Aug. 16-25.

The Aptos players weren't quite as collected after the triumph.

When the final out was made, the Aptos players streaked — smiles a mile wide — toward first base, where they jumped on winning pitcher Kyle Anderson, forming a huge dogpile. Their victory came in front of a rowdy crowd of 10,000, many of whom were in the corner of the only California team remaining in the 12-team tournament.

The 12 players and three coaches didn't have long to wait before they got to see the "Welcome to Williamsport" signs. Early this morning, a bus picked the boys up at their barracks at Al Houghton Stadium and drove the team to Los Angeles International Airport. There, the team caught the first flight to the home of Little League Baseball.

Little League Baseball pays the way for all three coaches and as many as 14 players to travel to the World Series.



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Emma Littlefield and her mom, Judy, cheer an Aptos hit at a fund-raising party for Aptos Little League at Village Host Pizza on Tuesday night.

Little Leaguers' families, fans cheer on 'good kids'

By KAREN A. DAVIS

SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

APTOS — Chalk one up for the boys in blue.

The hometown crowd cheered on the Aptos Little League All-Stars from the cheap seats Tuesday night — catching the play-by-play action on ESPN2 from several locations throughout Seascape.

Village Host Pizza, Seascape Resort and Britania Arms Pub were a few of the locations cheers of "Go Aptos!" could be heard. The noise was deafening, but the spirit was contagious, with hundreds gathering early and more stopping in as the evening wore on.

History made

Aptos first county team to reach World Series/Sports, Page D1

The team did have at least one big incentive to play their best-ever game. The win means no school next week for the eight boys on the team who are slated to begin Aptos Junior High on Monday.

The All-Stars have a lot of other things going for them, as well, according to Claudia McCauley, mother of catcher Drew McCauley, 12. All the teammates are friends. Many of them go back ages in kid years — all the way to kindergarten.

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'They have wonderful managers and coaches. They take it seriously, but they also know how to have fun. They are good, sweet kids.'

CLAUDIA McCAULEY,
MOTHER OF CATCHER
DREW McCAULEY, 12

es," she said. "They take it seriously, but they also know how to have fun. They are good, sweet kids."

Paul and Robert Bailey of Aptos chalked the team's winning spirit up to "great kids, great coaching and a great community."

"Baseball is a game of outs," said Chuck Wasserman of Aptos during the fifth inning, when things were looking doubtful. Wasserman has watched the team progress all season.

"These kids have matured, grown and really shown their mettle here," Wasserman said following the win.

Kids of all ages came out in support of the team.

"Our little community is on the map now," said 78-year-old Celene Jandreau of Aptos.

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"They are wonderful. They are so unassuming," she said, comparing the Little Leaguers to some of the money-hungry Major League players.

Twelve-year-old Riki St. John, a friend of Andrew Biancardi, said she always had faith the team would claim victory.

"I don't think Andrew thought he'd get this far, but they're really great baseball players and it doesn't surprise me," she said.

"We're feeling good right now," agreed Taylor Paul, 18, an Aptos All-Star team alumni, donning an Aptos Little League shirt.

McCauley said the victory is one everyone can be proud of.

"I don't know what to say. No team from Santa Cruz has ever done this," said the stunned team mom after the win. "This belongs to the whole county. They are all our kids now."

The Aptos Little League is accepting donations to help offset travel costs for players' families attending the Little League World Series in Williamsport, Pa., Aug. 16-25. Donations may be sent to Little League Fund, P.O. Box 1416, Aptos, CA 95001.

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