

Baseball

# PLAY BALL!



Volunteers spray paint the Little League logo onto the grass of one of the fields at Little League headquarters in Williamsport, Pa., Thursday, The World Series starts today.

## ✓ Aptos enjoys its day of multicultural mingling

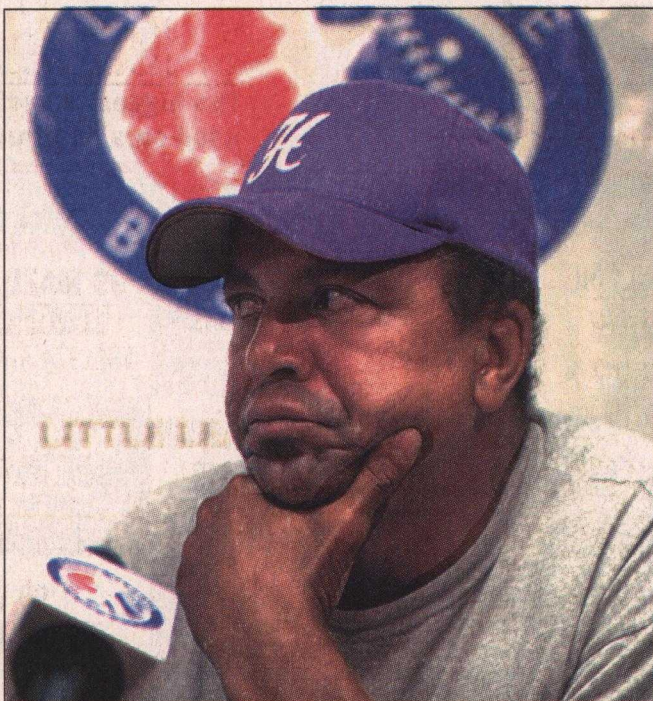
By **JULIE JAG**  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

The Aptos Little League All-Stars had to go all the way to Williamsport, Pa., to get some culture.

Sixteen teams qualified for the Little League World Series, some coming from as far away as Japan, Russia and Venezuela. Thursday, for the first time since they all were flown to Williamsport for the tournament, the players had a chance to confront the kids with whom they would be spending the next nine days. The icebreaker started with a mandatory barbecue, then eventually branched into the gameroom.

After doing a little research, the Aptos boys made some interesting discoveries. For instance, they learned that the best Ping Pong players hail from Texas and Saudi Arabia.

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Associated Press photos

Harlem manager Morris McWilliams says he isn't bitter that his team was accused of using illegal players.

## Harlem squad cleared, will play Aptos Tuesday

By **DAN LEWERENZ**  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**SOUTH WILLIAMSPORT, Pa.** — The Harlem Little League team was cleared to play in the World Series on Thursday after providing documents showing that its players met residency requirements.

Little League officials partly blamed the leadership of the New York City team for not submitting the proper documents before the regular season. But the team has since provided paperwork refuting accusations it was ineligible because some players did not live within the league's boundaries.

"These kids weren't recruited from anywhere. They weren't brought in from another district or league. They're homegrown," said Stephen Keener, Little League's president and CEO.

Last summer's Little League World Series also was tainted by scandal when a pitcher from the Bronx, N.Y., Danny Almonte, was discovered to be too old to play. Almonte's team was forced to forfeit its third-place finish after officials determined he was 14 instead of 12.

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# Harlem

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Keener said there was no comparison between the Rolando Paulino team's actions and those of Harlem Little League.

"Harlem did not attempt to cheat to get here. Rolando Paulino did," he said.

This year's World Series is scheduled to begin today. The Harlem team advanced by winning the Mid-Atlantic Regional.

Morris McWilliams, manager of Harlem Little League, said he had "no feeling of bitterness at all" about the investigation.

"Little League did what they had to do," he said. "We provided them with the documentation, and they made their decision. We're ready to play ball."

A protest lodged earlier Thursday by the Lehigh Little League of Bethlehem, Pa., which was defeated by the Harlem team in a qualifying game Tuesday night, was denied, the league said.

Jack Lule, whose son John plays second base for Bethlehem, said players would accept the decision, but he criticized the league for failing to resolve the issue earlier in the season.

"I think Little League needs to get its rules much more organized so these things don't happen," Lule said.

In ruling that the Harlem team would remain eligible, Little League laid some of the blame at the feet of the team's managers for keeping disorganized records.

"It was clear to the tournament committee that the leadership of the Harlem Little League failed in its responsibility to gather and submit the proper documents to Little League Baseball International before the start of the regular

season," officials said in a statement.

"These documents, if submitted before or during the regular season, would have been acceptable at that time in establishing the eligibility of the players in question," the statement said.

This year's investigation began after Newsday reported Wednesday that as many as three players lived outside the Harlem Little League district, including star pitcher Alibay Barkley.

Although each Little League has distinct geographic boundaries, there are circumstances under which a player can play outside the area where he lives. A boy can play in any league where his parent or guardian lives, can continue to play in one league even after moving to another district, and can play in any league where his parents volunteer, even if he lives elsewhere.

Officials declined to outline the specifics of the players' living arrangements Thursday. They said one of the three investigated clearly lived inside the Harlem Little League District. Two others had moved outside the league's boundaries but had been playing in Harlem Little League for at least four years, so they were entitled to continue participating.

Little League officials said the documentation used to uphold Harlem's eligibility was provided by the disputed players' families and others who know the players. Family members also were interviewed.

Following last year's scandal, Little League strengthened its rules for documenting the age and residence of players. Each team must show proof that its players meet age and residence requirements — first at the local level, and again if they win their state tournament and reach the regional.

his fourth season. ... Oakland rookie pitcher fumbled twice in the se-

# Aptos

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"We just play against them and start talking to them and stuff," said pitcher/outfielder Kyle Anderson, speaking by cell phone during a break from the Ping Pong action.

While most of the Aptos squad spent its time around the teams from the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, Aptos manager Dave Anderson and coach Mark Eichhorn reminisced with their counterparts from Venezuela.

Eichhorn, a former Major League pitcher, played winter baseball in Venezuela from 1981-82. He said many of the coaches knew the names of players he had shared the field with. Or at least that's what he thought they said.

"Mark knows just enough Spanish to get himself in trouble," Dave Anderson said.

They clicked so well, though, that the Venezuelans even offered to let Anderson and Eichhorn in on one of their game-time rituals — the home run dance.

"They run around slapping their hands," Dave Anderson said. "They've got the whole dancad wired."

Some of the teams weren't quite so easy to get to know. Both the Japanese and Russian teams brought translators, as most of their coaches and players do not speak English.

Clyde Tanabe, manager of the Hawaii team, which shares a wall with

the Russian team, said getting messages across has been trying.

"If you want to communicate, you have to go to a coach," he said. "The rest of the kids pretty much stick to themselves."

Aside from mingling, the Aptos team spent some more time Thursday talking to TV crews. The players re-interviewed with ESPN in the morning, then spent some time chatting up the people from ABC.

Both networks are scheduled to air Little League World Series games.

Aptos also got its first look at Howard J. Lamade Stadium, where the World Series final will be held. Though the batting cages, which are housed under the stadium, were somewhat suffocating, overall the team seemed impressed by the structure.

"It was awesome. It's so nice," said Kyle Anderson. "It'll be so cool. We'll get to play in front of so many people."

The team's first game is Saturday at 9 a.m. against Great Lakes Region representative from Louisville, Ky. That game will be played in Little League Volunteer Stadium.

The Aptos players will watch pool-mates Harlem, N.Y., (Mid-Atlantic Region) and Clemmons, N.C., (South-

east Region) battle on the field of Lamade Stadium later Saturday, but won't get a chance to play on the field themselves until Tuesday, when they face Harlem in their final pool-play game.

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