

Baseball

56th Little League World Series



Aug. 16-25, Williamsport, Pa.

# NEXT STOP: WILLIAMSPORT

## Amazing comeback gives Aptos World Series berth

By JULIE JAG  
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

SAN BERNARDINO — Maybe Tyler Raymond should pick on someone his own size. Maybe not.

The 6-foot strongman of the Aptos Little League All-Stars hit a sixth-inning, three-run home run that helped his team defeat the Arrowhead team of Glendale, Ariz., to win the Western Region Tournament championship 4-3.

In doing so, he helped Aptos become the first team in Santa Cruz County history to advance to the Little League World Series in Williamsport, Pa.

Aptos pulled off the feat in front of 10,000 boisterous fans who filled every seat plus some in Al Houghton Stadium. After the final out was made, 11 boys with smiles a mile wide streaked toward pitcher Kyle Anderson, who they then dogpiled.

"This is easily the best day of my life," Anderson said.

It was probably the best day of Raymond's life, as well. The center fielder who stands at least 6 inches taller than the tallest Arizona player, couldn't have hit his three-run homer at a better time.

After a strong start both offensively and defensively, in which Aptos didn't allow a hit and scored a run of its own, things fell apart in the fifth. Arizona scored three runs on two errors in that inning to give Arrowhead the 3-1 lead.

With just three outs standing between Aptos and a sad trip home, Andrew Biancardi reached base with a single to center field. J.B. Burns walked after battling through a 3-2 count and several foul balls. Then Raymond, who had only one hit — a single — in the entire tournament, stepped into the box.

Arizona pitcher Chris Capper gave him one low and away, and Raymond reached down and slapped it over the center field fence.

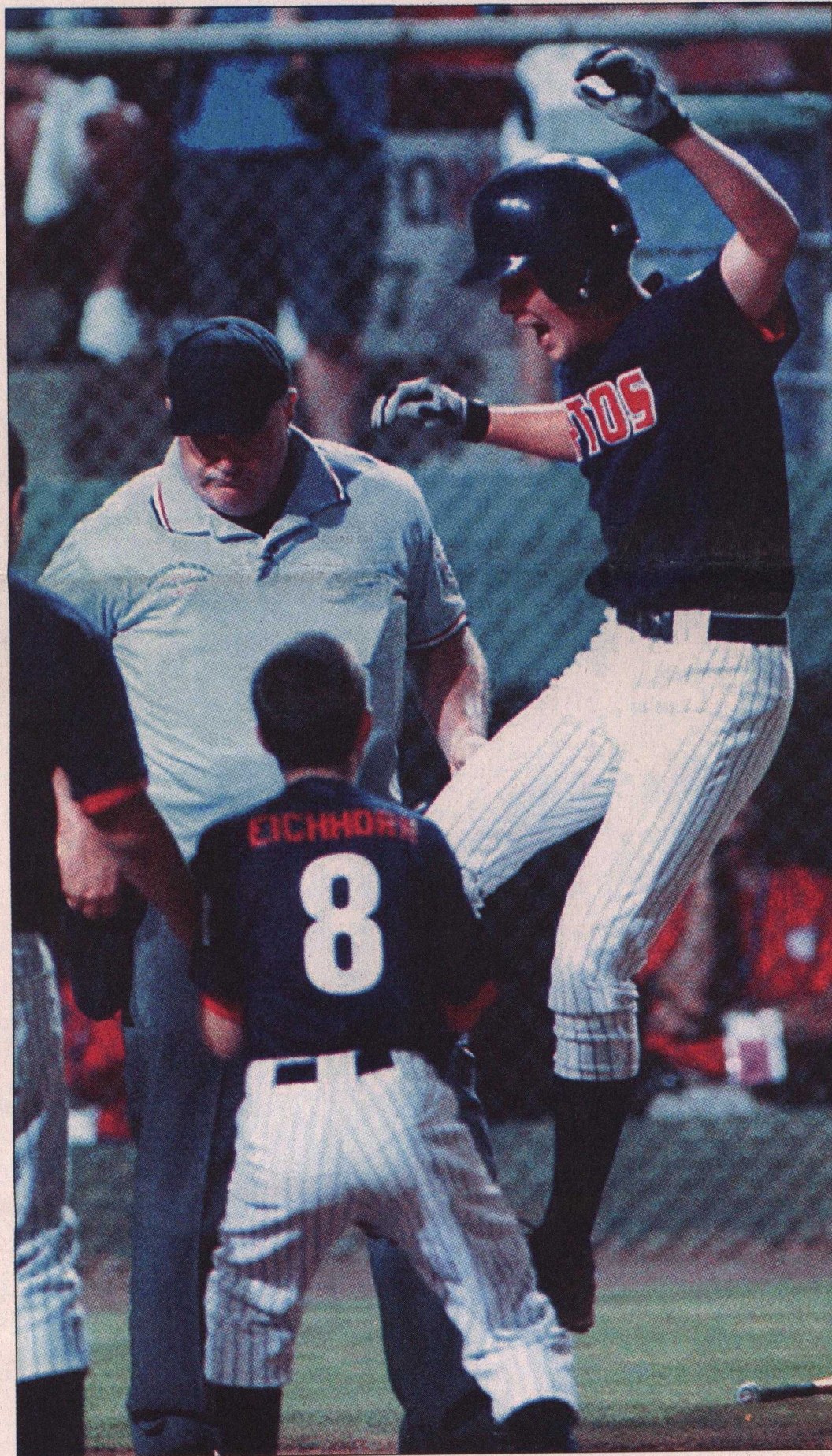
"I just saw the first ball that I could hit, so I swung away," Raymond said. "I was just trying to make contact."

The homer put Aptos up 4-3, and Raymond said he knew the lead was in good hands — Anderson's.

After three innings where he struck out seven and allowed no hits, Anderson slipped a little in the fourth. There, he gave up one hit and walked one, but still managed to get Aptos out of the inning unscathed. He faltered in the fifth, allowing three hits, which went to Capper, Tyler Salefsky and Tony Corossi to load the bases.

Then things started to unravel for Aptos. With one out, Dustin Grande hit a drive to first that bounced off the top of Kevin Farmer's glove to bring in Austin Buelow, who was

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Aptos outfielder Tyler Raymond stomps on home plate with the eventual winning run Tuesday night as Brian Godoy and Kevin Eichhorn get ready to celebrate. Raymond's three-run homer won the ballgame.

### Once-in-a-lifetime experience awaits the kids from Aptos

A year ago, Oceanside American Little League of California, the Western Region champion, advanced all the way to the semifinals of the Little League World Series.

The team then ran into 14-year-old Danny Almonte, a pitcher for the Rolando Paulino Little League of the Bronx.

Oceanside's 12-year-olds — Little League's maximum allowable age — held up well in that game, but the team from the Bronx won it 1-0, and eventually won the championship.

It was a heartbreaking blow for Oceanside.

It was made even worse when Almonte's true age was discovered and the Bronx team eventually disqualified.

By then it was too late to do anything about tainted Bronx victories, or to assuage hurt feelings from a number of teams left in the wake of this scandal.

A year later, Dennis Carroll, the coach of that Oceanside team, seems to harbor no bitterness about what is surely one of the most bizarre Series moments ever. He, in fact, cherishes the experience. It'll never happen again, he said of a trip to the Little League World Series, and that's why the memories are good.

It's literally once in a lifetime for a select group of young ballplayers.

Carroll, who is still active in Southern California youth sports, offers this advice to any team that gets the chance to experience the Little League World Series, such as Aptos, which qualified with a 4-3 win over Arizona on Tuesday.

"Cherish it. You'll never forget it," Carroll said Tuesday.

Prior to Tuesday's title game, Carroll said Aptos looked like a sure thing to not only advance, but to do well at the Little League World Series. And he just may be right. Aptos certainly showed resilience in coming from behind in the final inning to beat Arizona.

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**BOB  
LINNEMAN**

*'I just saw the first ball that I could hit, so I swung away. I was just trying to make contact.'*

TYLER RAYMOND

In Williamsport, Pa.

### Aptos in Pool-Play Round

**Saturday** — Aptos (West champion) vs. Louisville, Ky. (Great Lakes champion), 9 a.m., ESPN, Little League Volunteer Stadium

**Sunday** — Clemmons, N.C. (Southeast champion) vs. Aptos, 10 a.m., ESPN, Little League Volunteer Stadium

**Tuesday** — Aptos vs. Harlem (Mid-Atlantic champion), 1 p.m., ESPN2, Howard J. Lamade Stadium

## Aptos

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pinch running for Capper, allowing Salefsky to score. A wild pitch by Anderson allowed Corrossi to cross, making it 3-1.

Anderson limited the damage by striking out Arizona's best hitter, Nick Carillo, then induced Chris Welch to ground out to end the inning.

Aptos coach Mark Eichhorn said Anderson wasn't about to give up after one bad inning. "I would say he had one thing in mind, and that was that he wanted to be there for the dogpile performance," Eichhorn said, referring to the team's postgame celebration.

He ended up allowing a total of three unearned runs on four hits with nine strikeouts.

Arizona, the youngest team in the tournament with six 11-year-olds on the roster, showed its youth early.

In the top of the first, Kevin Eichhorn scored when 11-year-old Travis Lane made a costly error.

Biancardi hit a popfly to short center to load the bases with Eichhorn and Anderson, each of whom



Manager Dave Anderson wipes tears from his son Kyle's eye during a visit to the mound.

reached on power hits of their own. Lane, playing center field, apparently thought Eichhorn was going to round third on the hit and continue toward home. He didn't until Lane, anxious to stop the run, made the throw. When Carillo, the catcher, missed it, Eichhorn safely crossed home plate.

Arizona manager Tim Welch said the youth made a difference. "You can see on the field by looking at the differences in the sizes of the kids," Welch said. "We've been the underdog from day one."

Aptos wouldn't get much time to savor its victory. The team boarded a bus at 3 this morning to catch the first flight to Williamsport, Pa. The team has to be there for opening ceremonies Friday, but won't play until Saturday, when it meets Louisville, Ky., at 9 a.m. Pacific.

"I've been watching the Little League World Series for the last four or five years," Anderson said. "I can't believe I'm actually going there."

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## Linneman

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Carroll, whose wife Cathy Costabile was born and raised in Santa Cruz, also described what the Little League World Series experience is like, and what Aptos' 12 players, two coaches, families, friends and whoever else is traveling along for the ride, can expect.

First off, after the Aptos players polished off Arizona in the Western Region final, they went through interviews, photo shoots, ceremonies and then back to the barracks adjacent to the stadium in San Bernardino.

But before dawn this morning, they were pulled from bed and bussed to LAX for a 7 a.m. flight to Pittsburgh. From there, a charter flight will take them to Williamsport, Pa., the Cooperstown of Little League Baseball.

"It will be a whirlwind," Carroll said. "Everything is happening at once. From the excitement of the victory, and the trip back East, and

trying to get some sleep. And they better remember to clean up the barracks, and don't forget anything. It'll just get thrown away."

Carroll said he and his team learned that lesson the hard way.

In Williamsport, he said, players are treated like kings. Sponsors reportedly shower the players with free goods, and baseball manufacturers load up teams with new equipment.

Then there is the uniform. As the representative of the Western Region, Aptos will wear green and gold uniforms with "Wes't" blazoned across the chest.

"That was a big moment for our kids," Carroll said of his Oceanside team. "They really loved those uniforms."

Carroll said Oceanside American collected 20 new bats during its run a year ago from various companies, not to mention baseballs, gloves and other equipment.

It's a wild ride, to be sure, Carroll said. So get ready.

He offers the following Little League World Series survival tips:

■ Enjoy the experience. "Remem-

ber you are part of one of the 16 best teams in the world," he said.

■ For coaches, don't put too much pressure on the players. "It's still a ballgame played between the lines," he said. "Yes, it's the World Series. But if you get caught up in the hype, it'll ruin you."

■ Players need to be themselves. "The press will hound them, trying to get quotes, so they just have to be themselves," he said. "And have fun."

■ Avoid falling out of the top bunks (in the dorms). "We had five kids do that," Carroll said. "I couldn't believe it."

■ Don't skip meals, something easy to do amid all the excitement of such a huge event. "It could be stifling hot back there so you need to eat and drink plenty of fluids," he said.

■ Bring a lot of pins. Pins are barter at the Little League World Series, which features 16 teams from all over the world.

■ Don't believe what Little League baseball tells you. "They told us we'd never find a place to stay," he said. "So some of our par-

ents had to settle for this real dump. Then we heard there were nice places, bed and breakfasts, cheaper and only a few miles out of town."

■ Carroll advises travelers to check with the Chamber of Commerce for an accurate idea of lodging and other accommodations.

While Carroll's Oceanside club suffered a truly disappointing fate, the team is certainly part of history. And it's something they will never forget.

"The memories will last a lifetime," he said.

Carroll is pulling for Aptos, and not just because his family has local ties. He sees in Aptos a team similar to his own Oceanside club.

"They look as good as we did last year," said Carroll, who attended two of Aptos' games in the Western Regional. "I really believe they are going to make it, and do well."

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