

July 30 Babe Ruth SNJ 14s



*Hamilton's Dan Mostrangeli leaps on to home plate after his game-tying homer in the fifth inning today (Photo by John Blaine/purchase photos at [jbsportphoto@aol.com](mailto:jbsportphoto@aol.com)).*

**Hamilton falls one rally short in dogged quest to force the "if" game**

By Rich Fisher; [Fish4Scores.com](http://Fish4Scores.com)

July 30: For Hamilton Babe Ruth 14-year-old fans it was brutally disappointing.

But for the casual baseball fan, it was a showcase.

Northern Burlington and Hamilton locked up in a true classic today, before Northern emerged with a 9-6 victory to win the SNJ State Tournament championship and advance to the Mid-Atlantic Regional in Williamsport, Pa.

Hamilton needed to win twice to claim the title.

The Switlik Gang rallied from 4-0 and 6-4 deficits to tie it, both times with two outs and the bases empty. But it had no answer for Bret Parlante's three-run homer in the top of the seventh inning.

It tried to respond, of course. It wouldn't be Hamilton if it didn't.

Austin Constantini and Tino Malave drew one out walks, but Dan Mostrangeli and Nick Leona followed with deep fly balls to end it.

"That team does have a lot of fight, they've got heart," Parlante said. "But we have a lot of heart as well. We knew we could come back and do it."

"Two hard nosed teams," agreed Hamilton manager Mike "Mo" Mocer Sr. "This was just a really good baseball game. Not many mistakes, maybe on or two. It was just a good game.

"They're just a good team. They hit the ball and they keep hitting."

It was the second straight classic the two teams played and second straight heart-break for Hamilton. In the winner's bracket final NB rallied from a 3-0 deficit and scored two in the bottom of the seventh for a walk off win.

Today the roles were reversed as Hamilton kept coming back, but Northern kept repelling the Yardville boys.

Hamilton appeared to have all the fates against it early in the contest.

In the second inning, Leona led off getting hit by a pitch and Astbury followed with a scalding line drive. But the ball went right to third baseman Matt Multer who doubled Leona off first.

In the top of the fourth, all kinds of bizarreness ensued. Ryan Shinn led off with a walk and Nick Wright got an infield single. The two runners advanced on a wild pitch with no outs.

Constantini then picked off Shinn at third. What looked like it would be a momentum changer went awry when Anthony Meduri singled to make it 2-0.

After a fly out, Parlante singled and Sean Smith grounded to Astbury at short on a ball that took some weird bounces. Astbury was given a tough error by the official scorer and the bases were loaded. Cashman then hit a ball that took an incredibly bad, high hop over Astbury to plate two more runs.

In the bottom of the fourth the first two batters went down and Hamilton was still looking for its first hit. It finally came by Mostrangeli and seemed innocent enough.

But then Leona was hit again and Astbury and Nick Payesko walked to force in a run. Cole McManimon followed with a two-run single and Payesko came all the way around to score when NB attempted (unsuccessfully) to get McManimon in a rundown between first as second.

Northern barely blinked, however, as Ryan Shinn slammed a two-run homer in the top of the fifth for a 6-4 lead. Hamilton did it again in the bottom of the inning when Malave's two-out single was followed by Mostrangeli's homer.

In the seventh, Northern put runners on second and third with none out. Constantini then got two ground-outs that kept the runners frozen before Parlante drilled a 1-1 curveball over the leftfield fence.

“Mike (Moceri Jr.) said ‘Do we want to walk (Parlante)?’” Moceri Sr. said. “We asked Austin and Austin said he wanted to get him. He had 85 pitches, we could have brought somebody else in but when he gets on the mound he doesn’t want to come out.

“The kid hit a good curveball. It was a good pitch and he hit it.”

The way this game was going, it looked like Hamilton might force the “if” game in the seventh when two runners reached.

“I thought we were going to push something across,” Moceri said. “But, it didn’t happen.”

It marks the end of the road for Hamilton, which can be extremely proud of its run this summer. Despite losing leftfielder Matt Dempsey to injury in the districts, the Switlik Gang won six straight to earn a District One title and reached the finals of the states for the second straight year.

Last year, Hamilton reached the state finals as 13-year-olds and fell just one game short.

“They’ll build on this for next year and we’ll see what happens with this group of kids,” Moceri said. “We’ve been close. We had two stars missing from last year, it was a different-look thing. But they played good, they did a good job.”

A very good job.

It just happened to be against a very good team.