

Aug. 4 Babe Ruth Mid-Atlantic Regional: Hamilton clinches bracket berth



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Richard Brown fires a pitch against Bear in tonight's Hamilton win at Switlik Park. Brown allowed just one hit and no walks in four innings (Photo by John Blaine/purchase photos by e-mailing jbsportsphoto@aol.com).

Bs are wild as Birthday Boy, Big inning and Brown pace Hamilton 15s

By Rich Fisher

Fish4Scores.com

Aug. 4: It was an inning that went from frustrating to fruitful.

And it proved to give Hamilton all the momentum it needed en route to a 10-0, five-inning win over Bear (Del.) in tonight's Babe Ruth 15-year-old Mid-Atlantic Regional game at Switlik Park.

Hamilton exploded for eight second-inning runs (after it looked like they might squander a big opportunity) and let pitcher Rich Brown do the rest as the Switlik Gang improved to 2-0 in Pool A play and clinched a spot in bracket play.

Brown threw four innings of one-hit ball, allowing no walks with one strikeout. Birthday boy Luke Westerberg had a sweet 16th, going 2-for-2 with a double, homer, four RBIs and three runs scored.

"I was kind of hoping to have a big game," said the catcher, who got a celebratory shaving cream pie in the face from his teammates. "When I was 12 and still in little league I did really well on my birthday and was hoping it would carry over.

"I hit two home runs and pitched a complete game on my birthday in a regular-season game (the season was extended by rainouts). But this one meant more because it was regionals, and we're trying to win it."

The Yardville Gang put itself in a good position after this victory.

Hamilton will finish pool play Friday by resuming its suspended game with Evans at Switlik Park at 1 p.m., and meeting undefeated Niskayuna (N.Y.) at 8 tonight in a key game.

If Hamilton can sweep both games it will win the pool and earn a first-round bye in bracket play. Even if it loses the morning game, a win over Niskayuna would give Hamilton first in the pool as both teams would be 3-1 and the hometown squad would own the tie-breaker on head-to-head competition.

That's not to say the morning game means nothing, as Hamilton is still playing for the best record and highest seeding possible.

"It's kind of weird," Westerberg said of resuming a suspended game. "But it's happened to me before and once you get the game going, you're used to it."

Bear, which won its first game earlier in the day with a 10-3 win over Evans, finished pool play 1-3. The Delaware squad was never in this one after Hamilton's early explosion.

The game's pivotal inning started with a walk to Westerberg, and Gerry Gomez followed with an RBI double and moved to third on an overthrow. Nick LaBelle walked and stole second, putting runners at second and third with no outs.

Hamilton looked poised for a big inning, but things turned seemingly sour when Tyler Barlow was robbed after hitting a hard line drive and Ray Mazzella fanned. But Gomez scored on a wild pitch and Brown followed with an RBI single to give Hamilton a 3-0 lead and the inning was salvaged.

After that, it went way beyond salvation.

Dan Garcia singled and Joe Paragone delivered an RBI single. Johnny Mastrangelo walked



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Oops! Leftfielder Ray Mazzella had the unfortunate luck of losing this second-inning fly ball in the lights and having it bounce right off the ol' noggin during the second inning of tonight's game. But Mazzella shrugged it off and remained in the game (Photo by John Blaine/purchase photos by e-mailing jbsportsphoto@aol.com).

and Westerberg rocked a two-run double to centerfield that just missed going out.

"I knew I just missed it," Westerberg said. "I got it just off the end of the bat and that aggravated me."

He scored anyway, as Gomez followed with a two-run single to give him three RBIs in the inning.

"That was big," said Brown, who suddenly found himself with an eight-run cushion. "We haven't been hitting that much in the tournament but we brought our bats today. We went up there swinging tonight and everything just clicked.

"I went back out there and was feeling good with that lead. Our defense was making the plays and there was really nothing to worry about. Just let them hit it."

Which is exactly what Brown did.

"I was throwing my curveball a lot," said the left-hander, whose mom Lisa became known as the Voice of Switlik Park during the regular season. "Once we got the lead we didn't set up batters to strike them out. We just wanted to have them hit it and make the plays."

"It was really big when we busted the game open and started piling it on," Westerberg said. "(Brown) could just throw strikes and let them hit it. He had a real good curveball tonight."

Kevin Smiegocki wrapped it up by pitching a scoreless fifth inning. The game ended on the 10-run mercy rule thanks to Westerberg's two-run homer in the fourth.

"I got a first-pitch fastball and just jumped on it," Westerberg said."

Hamilton's offense hopes to keep jumping on teams Friday as it seems to be getting on a roll.

"We got our nerves out of the way (in states) and we know how good we can play," Westerberg said. "We're playing pretty good now."

Good enough to turn an inning of potential frustration into plenty of celebration.

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With the top three teams getting into bracket play, Hamilton clinched a birth with tonight's win. Here is how:

Let's assume the Yardville Crew loses to Evans Youth and Niskayuna and ends up 2-2. The only other game that would matter is the Frederick-Evans game. Both teams would enter the game at 1-2, meaning that one will join Bear at 1-3 so any team with two wins or more is in Saturday's action. Hamilton, however, would rather win both, keep its momentum alive and get Saturday morning's quarterfinals off.

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Today's game will resume with Evans batting in the top of the fourth with a man on first and one out in a scoreless game. . . In other games today, Tri-Township, Pa. beat Basking Ridge 15-2 to go to 3-0 in Pool B. Tri-Township has won all three games by the 10-run rule. Niskayuna moved to 3-0 in Pool A with an 11-5 win over Frederick Md., which dropped the Maryland crew to 1-2. Manasquan moved to 2-0 in Pool B with an 8-7 win over Kingsbridge in eight innings.

Click link below for updated scores and standings:

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