

# Buff Whelan survives long day

By Brad Emmons  
staff writer

Rey Praccasi, the manager for Duffy's Plumbing, may have summed up best the National Amateur Baseball Federation's College Division regional last weekend at Livonia's Ford Field.

"This is the most screwed-up draw of any tournament that I've been associated with," he said.

The eventual winner of the five-team tournament, Buff Whelan Chevrolet, won in a peculiar way.

The Detroit Adray League representative played a triple-header on Sunday, capped off by a 9-7 victory, a game which inched past the stroke of midnight, against Livonia Collegiate Baseball League representative Hines Park Lincoln/Mercury.

Whelan manager Dr. Joe Arends, whose team advanced to the NABF finals today in Dayton, Ohio, said, "I've never had a longer day of baseball."

"I'm sure tired after 27 innings of ball, but can you imagine how these kids feel? But I'm not terribly surprised. The NABF has never been a highly organized group."

Sunday started with three survivors — Whelan, Hines Park and Duffy's (the other Livonia representative).

After taking a 13-2 pounding Saturday afternoon from Whelan, Duffy's came back in Sunday's opener to hand the Detroit squad its first loss of the double-elimination tournament, 8-1.

Stuart Hirschman, a 17-year-old pickup by Praccasi, threw eight strong innings to earn the victory. Jason Hicks came on in the eighth to finish up as the Detroiters were held to just two hits.

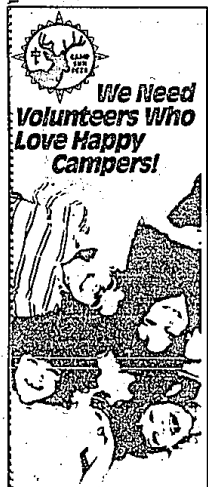
Duffy's collected 12 hits, led by Ron Makowski's 3-for-5 effort. Mike Kaczmarek, Todd Praccasi and Lee Tapp, all from Observant high school, added two hits apiece. Shortstop Steve Michels knocked in a pair of runs.

BUT AFTER reviewing the NABF tournament bylaws, Duffy's was forced to play Whelan again in the second game on Sunday.

The reason? Both Whelan and Duffy's had already been given byes, while Hines Park, which had been scraped by in the loser's bracket, was entitled to its first bye on Sunday.

"We play Buff Whelan three straight times and never once play Hines Park, a team in our own league... tell me that makes sense," said Praccasi.

In Sunday's second game, Whelan eliminated Duffy's in a squeaker, 6-5, as relief pitcher Joe Skalsgier came on in the eighth inning to slam the door on Duffy's.



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## baseball

More baseball, Page 4D

Ron Kurinski, a pickup from Livonia's Ford Field, was the losing pitcher. Michels and Dave Crespi combined for four of Duffy's seven hits, while Tom Yorkison and Dan Cimlin combined for four of Whelan's nine hits.

With temperatures plunging as evening fell, the final showdown pitted Hines Park against Whelan, the winner going to Dayton.

Whelan outlasted Hines Park in the slugfest, 9-7, as Craig Mayes, Dave Arends and Yorkison each collected three hits off Hines Park starter and loser Brett Loomis, who turned in a gutsy eight-inning performance.

THE KEY BLOW of the game came in the eighth when Marty Moraniec's bloop to right field dropped in for a two-run single.

Hines Park right fielder Dennis Szczechowski nearly made a spectacular catch on the play, but couldn't hold onto the ball after flipping over.

Terry Woods, a sophomore pitcher from the University of Michigan, came on in relief of Skalsgier in the fifth to pick up the victory.

Skalsgier was sent to the showers when Canton High senior Mike Culver ripped a two-run homer over the right field fence in the fourth. (He later added a double.) Kevin Learned singled in a pair of runs in the ninth, but Woods held off Hines Park to preserve the victory.

"Woods threw 65 pitches on Friday and another 60 today, so these guys got a little tired, but our relievers did the job when they had to," Arends said.

Whelan, noted as a hard-hitting team, finished fourth in the Detroit League with a 2-13 record.

"We were very respectable this year, but last year we took our lumps," Arends said. "We led the Adray League in home runs. Today they held us up a few and this is a big part."

"But the important thing for me is

that the kids have to have fun. Summer baseball is supposed to be fun, and it's my job to make sure that we laugh and joke around. Too many of these kids came to me from other teams and said, 'Coach, I wasn't having fun and everything was too serious.' That's why I'm coaching."

WHELAN OPENED first-round tournament play on Friday with an 11-8 triumph over Hines Park.

Woods worked out the sixth, when he was relieved by Kevin Knoche.

Hines Park used two pitchers, including lefty Derek Dorkowski of Michigan State (he took the loss), and Randy Buckler, the right-hander from LCBF champion Walter's Appliance.

Catcher Dan Niemiec slammed a pair of homers — a two-run shot in the second and a solo shot in the sixth — each in a losing cause. Jeremy Kroll (Garden City) added two hits and Chris Slater knocked in a pair of runs.

Chris, a junior at the University of Detroit, went 4-for-4 for the winners.

In the other first-round game Friday, Duffy's outlasted Sterling Heights, 13-7, as Kaczmarek (Franklin High and Henry Ford CO), Joel Masot and Mike Sijawek each collected two hits. Makowski and Brad Bush contributed two RBI apiece.

Jason Hicks, the winning pitcher, worked five innings before giving way to Kurinski and Joe Jentzer (save).

The first game on Saturday was probably the most memorable of the tournament as Hines Park ousted the Northern Michigan Blues in 10 innings, 11-10.

HINES PARK TRAINED 9-0 after six innings, 10-3 after seven and 10-6 going into the ninth.

After scoring one in the ninth, Hines Park loaded the bases against Blues starter Justin Burke.

But a flyout to left (the second of the inning) turned into an adventure for the Blues, who managed to give up the eighth, ninth and 10th runs on the play, thanks to three consecutive throwing errors.

Niemiec, Szczechowski and Joel Riggs all scored on the miscue, which was reminiscent of a scene from the "Bad News Bears."

## South has 4 players on all-tourney squad

South Farmington didn't win the American Amateur Baseball Congress regional tournament, but the Mickey Mantle ballclub played well enough to have four players named to the all-tournament team.

Eric Miller, Dennis Pirronello, Mike Campbell and Matt Fennelly distinguished themselves during post-season play in Coldwater last weekend. South won its first two games but then lost two in a row Saturday and was eliminated.

Miller finished the tournament with a .571 batting average to lead the team. Campbell hit .500 with six RBI, Pirronello .500 with four RBI and Fennelly .375 with two homers and six RBI.

Farmington began its tournament appearance Thursday with a 14-7 win over Kalamazoo in which Reggie McKinley pitched a complete game and drove-kicker. He balanced six walks against seven strikeouts.

Campbell went 4-for-5, which included a grand slam, and knocked in six runs. Miller had three of South's 14 hits, and Pirronello and Fennelly two each. Miller and Pirronello also scored a pair of runs, and Fennelly, who hit a solo homer, had two RBI.

SOUTH COACH Lou Pirronello called the next game with Team Tire of Sterling Heights one of the most exciting he's ever seen. Team Tire, a power in the Macomb League, boasted a 22-2 record, but Farmington pulled off a 13-10 victory in eight innings.

South tied the game (10-10) with a single run in the top of the seventh on Shondell Currie's RBI single. In a three-run eighth, Jeff O'Neill, a tournament pickup from Flint, and Jay Burley singled and scored on the same error, and Fennelly added an RBI single.

Fennelly, Miller and Burley had three hits apiece, but Fennelly had another home run and four RBI. Burley stole three bases.

Matt Strasiak, a tournament addition from Redford, Pirronello, Currie and Eric Wiesner had two hits and at least one RBI apiece. Strasiak also had three stolen bases.

Team Tire led 4-0 after one inning, but a four-hour rain delay interrupted a five-run second by South. When play resumed, Fennelly hit the first pitch for a three-run homer and a Farmington lead.

O'Neill pitched the last three innings and got the win. Miller started and was relieved by Ryan Grabetz of Monroe, another tournament addition. Highly touted Tim Bruce was the loser.

Despite outpitching the Sterling Heights Bulldogs 5-2 on Saturday, South suffered a 3-1 setback. Farmington was behind from the start after the Bulldogs got all their runs on a three-run homer in the first inning. South's only run came on Wiesner's seventh-inning single.

SCOTT LAKATOS went the distance for South. Chris Kiel, the No. 1 pick in the state out of the Macomb League and the tournament MVP, got the win.

Farmington was knocked out of the tournament last that day when Westland I, the eventual champion, posted a 12-6 victory.

Westland hit three home runs in the sixth inning, scoring six runs and breaking a 6-6 tie. The rally started with Jim Solak's solo shot, Larry Scheffer hit a two-run blast and Mike Gierzak capped the inning with a three-run homer.

O'Neill went five official innings and took the loss. Tyrone O'Neal pitched the rest of the sixth. George Leunge was the winner. Pirronello and O'Neill had two RBI apiece.

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