

Farmington's Fisher, Fox help make Livonia Travel team a big hit on diamond

Tigertown hits the spot this summer for Livonia Travel's Connie Mack (ages 16-18) baseball team.

Winning five consecutive games over the Fourth of July weekend in the Firecracker Tournament in Sterling Heights, Livonia Travel has earned an automatic berth in the 18-year-old USSSA World Series in Lakeland, Fla., spring training home of the Detroit Tigers.

"This was a great tournament for our guys," Livonia Travel manager Bill Rabe said. "We had not had a day off since school got out. We had a great tournament in Fort Wayne (Ind.) and took a few lumps in Cincinnati, but came home to win the toughest tourney around."

It took eight innings, but Livonia Travel managed to gain a 12-11 victory over the Michigan Tigers in the championship final. Chris Woodruff (Redford Catholic Central) staked Livonia

Travel to a 3-1 lead with a first-inning homer.

The Tigers tallied four runs in the fifth to take a 9-4 advantage, but Livonia responded with five in the bottom of the sixth sparked by Casey Rogowski's bases-loaded double.

Don Martin's 2-run homer gave the Tigers an 11-9 lead, but Livonia answered with three in the bottom of the eighth.

Bob Malek started the rally with a single followed by walks to Dave Lusky (CC) and Rogowski (CC).

Mike Fisher (Farmington Hills Harrison) then singled in a pair of runs.

Woodruff then walked to load the bases.

Roy Rabe's infield hit was mis-handled as the Tigers attempted to turn a double play, bringing home the game-winning run.

Livonia Travel starter Dale Hayes (Westland John Glenn)

pitched the first five innings, allowing seven runs. He was relieved by Derek Fox (Farmington), who pitched to four batters without getting an out.

He was replaced by Dave Lusky, the eventual winner.

In a tourney opener, Fisher and Rogowski each homered and knocked in three runs as Livonia Travel dropped the Metro Hawks, 9-5.

Corey Cook (Livonia Churchill), the winning pitcher, gave up five runs over five innings. Justin Draughn (Churchill) came on to earn the save.

In the second game, Livonia dumped the Tigers, 9-7, as Fisher, Malek and Woodruff each homered, while Rabe (Stevenson), Brent Zak (CC) and Mario D'Herrin (CC) collected two hits apiece.

Pitchers Jon Ritzler (Stevenson) and Fox combined for the victory.

Fox tossed a three-hitter as Livonia made it three straight with a 10-0 triumph over the Northwest Ohio Mavs.

Brett Wells (Churchill) and Fisher each had two hits and three RBI.

Livonia reached the championship game with 6-5 triumph over Steele's as Mark Cole (CC) allowed just three hits over six innings before giving way to Rabe, who earned the save.

Fisher homered in the win, while Hayes and D'Herrin each had two hits.

On Tuesday, Rogowski's RBI sacrifice fly scoring Brent Zak (CC) in the top of the seventh was the difference as Livonia turned back host Birmingham at Groves High School, 6-5.

An infield single by Zak followed by a Malek single set up the game-winner as first-place Livonia improved to 10-1 in the Little Caesar's Elite League and 20-6 overall.

Fisher clubbed a pair of homers — a 2-run shot and a solo blast. Woodruff was 2-for-4 with a homer and three RBI. Malek added two hits.

Ritzler, the winning pitcher, went the distance.

He retired the first 12 batters in order before settling for a three-hitter. Ritzler struck out five and walked two.

On Monday, Livonia scored a 7-1 victory over the Downriver Rams.

Rabe pitched a two-hitter, fanning seven and walking five. Pat Cash and Matt Gabrielli tallied the Rams' only two hits.

Mike Cooper Smith (Walled Lake Western) suffered the loss.

Rabe pitched a three-hitter last Thursday as Livonia bounced the Michigan Rams, 13-3, in a mercy-rule shortened game.

Rabe and Fox each collected three hits apiece to pace a 13-hit

attack. Hayes added two hits, including a homer.

On July 1, Livonia Travel suffered its first league defeat as Clarkston rallied from a 7-1 deficit to gain a 9-8 triumph.

George Drallos' 2-run homer in the bottom of the sixth proved to be the difference.

Cole, in relief of Malek, suffered the loss.

The Clarkston 6-run uprising came after Cole had retired 10 straight batters and allowed just three hits over five innings.

Malek doubled three times in the defeat.

On June 30, Livonia downed the Riverview Rams, 8-5, as Lusky was the winning pitcher. He allowed five hits over five innings while fanning five before giving way to Rabe, who earned the save.

Malek went 3-for-3 with three runs scored. Lusky and Fox each contributed two hits.

Jimmie's: A softball team so good it gives others the Willies

Larry Quartuccio just can't give it up.

Despite a recent job transfer to Florence, Ky., Quartuccio still spends his weekends managing one of the state's premier men's slow-pitch softball teams.

"We've had this team together for 20 years," Quartuccio said. "I've thought about giving it up, but I've been at it so long."

"The phone bills get kind of high with all the long-distance calls, but I still enjoy it. It's worth it."

The team is known as Jimmie's, but it also has three other sponsors — Varsity Athletics, a

sporting goods store; Easton, the aluminum bat maker; and Quesa, Quartuccio's company which does sewing and embroidery of sportswear apparel.

Last weekend in Milwaukee, Jimmie's stepped up two levels and finished fourth in the City of Festivals Coca-Cola Men's USSSA Softball Tournament.

That journey field included the top two ranked teams in Men's Major, Lighthouse/Worth and Sierra Power, along with Wegel/Hague, ranked No. 1 in Class AA.

The Westland-based team, ranked No. 3 in Class A, is now

23-4 overall.

"It was an accomplishment for a Class A team to finish fourth in a Men's Major," Quartuccio said.

On June 13-14, Jimmie's won a Major NIT in Cleveland.

In Milwaukee, the fences were 325 feet with 301 being the tournament minimum.

The balls vary from a 44-core (somewhat deadened) to as high as a 50-core (the most lively).

"It's still pretty much a game of power," Quartuccio said. "They've made advancements the last four years. The game has changed."

"With Easton as a sponsor (based in Van Nuys, Calif.) you have the best bat out there."

The average age of the Jimmie's roster is 30.

Westland John Glenn product Jim Sampson, 42, is one of the team's oldest statesmen along with third baseman Mark Matchulat, also 42, of Redford.

The 6-foot-4, 265-pound Sampson is one of the team's batting leaders. He hit .681 in Milwaukee.

kee.

"I like to call them 'seasoned' players — both are starters," Quartuccio said.

Livonia Churchill product Scott Hill, who batted .818 on route to All-Tournament honors in Milwaukee, provides power at catcher and DH.

Another Glenn grad, Chris Scheffer, also catches, and can hit the long ball.

He was a nose guard during his football days at Central Michigan University.

But Quartuccio doesn't necessarily rely on brute strength.

"I often go opposite of the flow," the Jimmie's manager said. "I like a good mix."

"Most teams build on home run power, but we have a couple of guys who weigh 160."

"We take a lot of pride in defense. I've been to a lot of world tournaments and you're not going to win unless you have team defense."

Quartuccio employs a different strategy.

"We only use three outfielders

with five guys in the infield," he said. "We don't play with a rover. We can get by with three outfielders because they're very, very quick."

Center fielder Johnnie Simpson, who commutes from Kalamazoo, batted .818 in Milwaukee.

He is flanked by left fielder Scott Janack of Belleville, an all-tourney pick in Milwaukee, and right fielder Tom Leung of Melvindale.

"And we're fortunate to have two pitchers who are the very best," said Quartuccio, referring to former Redford Thurston High product Raffi Kostegian and John Glenn grad Scott Nastally (now of Garden City). "I wouldn't trade them for anybody."

Bounding out the infield is first baseman Jason Riggs (Monroe), shortstop Randy Windham (Monroe), middle infielder John Recker (Farmington Hills Harrison) and Greg Tono (Farmington).

Recker was a former standout relief pitcher for Livonia Adray

in the Livonia Collegiate Baseball League.

Key reserves include Brian Donehue (Livonia Franklin), Rubin Gonzales and Eugene Bezan. Quartuccio's son Tony is an assistant coach.

The process for putting a team together starts in February. That's when the schedule is set.

After several summer road trips, the season culminates in the USSSA Class A World Series, Sept. 4-7, in Shawnee, Kan.

"You have to have total dedication from the guys," Quartuccio said. "Everybody has to be there; at each tournament barring a brother or sister getting married."

"All our guys usually get in on Friday nights, then we have a meeting to go over things."

"I usually do business up here on Thursdays and that's when we practice. It starts in March."

Then the process begins all over again for 1999.

And it's a good bet Quartuccio will be back for his 21st season.

Concealed Security's Pee Wee Reese team rules tourney

The Concealed Security Pee Wee Reese team of 12-year-olds captured its division of the Firecracker Classic in Warren during the July 4th holiday weekend.

The team improved its record to 33-0 with six victories in the tournament, played at Halmich Park in Warren.

Concealed Security nipped the FX Cubs of Macomb, leaders of their Pee Wee Reese division, by a 6-5 score in the championship game. Mark McDaniel of Goodrich

went the distance, striking out seven, to up his record to 8-0. Chuck Pate of Taylor, and Mike Krause of Garden City each had two hits.

Concealed Security opened the tournament with a 13-2 victory over the Troy Cardinals as Redford's Jason Krug raised his record to 6-0. Krause went 3-for-4 and Krug 2-for-2 in the win.

The Detroit Rangers fell to Concealed Security, 9-1, in the second game of the tournament behind the three-hit, five-strike-

out pitching of Tim Kalczynski (1-0) of Farmington.

Kalczynski went 3-for-3 and had three RBI. Robert Reznick went 2-for-3, as did Michael Monterey of Farmington Hills, Anthony Volpe of Farmington Hills and Krug.

McDaniel then pitched his team to a 10-3 victory over the Wayne Bandits, allowing just one hit and going 3-for-3 with three RBI. Krause, Kalczynski, Reznick and Volpe each had two hits.

Concealed Security wound up playing the Kosta Braves twice to reach the championship game, winning the first game 10-2 and the second, 6-3.

Chris Higley of Redford, now 5-0, won the 10-2 game. Krause, McDaniel and Kalczynski each collected two hits.

Pate raised his record to 9-6 with a one-hit, five-strikeout performance in the 6-3 win. He also went 2-for-2 while Kyle Miller of Farmington Hills went 3-for-4.

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Plaintiff: Elizabeth Partnership vs. Defendant(s): Georgina M. Tuzi, Marel Corporation, Susan Antanasoukili
Attorney for Plaintiff: Joseph L. Zando (5767465), P.O. Box 4010, East Lansing, MI 48826 (517) 333-7718
Public: June 25 and July 2 and 9, 1998

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