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## West Flagstaff Gray reaches Majors Little League City Tournament finals

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Jun 1, 2024



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Grayson Wolfe turns back to third base while in a rundown during Friday night's winner's bracket finals between the West Flagstaff Little League Gray Diamondbacks and the West Flagstaff Little League Green Diamondbacks at Dawson Field.

Cody Bashore, Arizona Daily Sun

Dawson Field at Continental Park hosted two games of the 2024 Majors Little League City Tournament on Friday night, with the first team qualifying for the championship round.

The first game of the day was the semifinal of the loser's bracket, where West Flag Little League Camo defeated Continental Little League Serpientes 14-10 to advance to the loser's bracket finals.

Runs continued to pour in during the latter of the two games as WFL Gray rolled past WFL Green 9-6 on its way to the championship round.

WFL Gray defeats WFL Green, 9-6

Green were 2-0 against Gray on the season before the teams met for a winner's bracket final matchup with a spot in the championship round on the line. The two losses were the only ones suffered by Gray all season.



Fortunes were ultimately flipped at Dawson Field as the Gray beat the Green for the first time, 9-6, on the back of a strong pitching performance from Matteo Vargas. Vargas allowed two runs, three walks and three hits in four innings, while striking out four. He also kept innings alive at the plate, scoring three runs with two walks.

Bases on balls played heavily into the hand of Gray as they recorded eight in the game. Six of the eight were recorded by the first three batters in Gray's lineup.

Shortstop Boone Salyer and center fielder Riley Bruce each walked twice. Salyer also scored three runs and doubled, while Bruce scored a run and knocked in a RBI.

WFLC Gray head coach Shane Burcar was impressed with his team's patience at the plate and said pitch counts and long at-bats can work in your favor at the Little League level.

"We want to be aggressive on the first strike," Burcar said. "If it's there, we're hitting it and if not, then take it. The nice thing about our at-bats is that we got the pitch count up and that's everything in Little League."

However, Burcar was not as happy about his team's strikeouts looking, saying it was a point of discussion during the team's postgame speech.

"You can't do that," he said. "You got to at least swing and go down in a blaze of glory or get a foul ball. We got to clean that up."

Despite a close score, Gray led early and never looked back. They led 2-0 after the first inning following crafty RBI hits from Grayson Wolf and Bennett Burcar.

After two innings, Gray led 4-0. Gray sent 10 batters to the plate in the bottom of the second, two scored and only two more reached via a base hit. Three walks, a hit batter and a failed throw to first on a dropped third strike to Vargas allowed the Gray to extend the inning. Eventually, Green starter Deegan Custer recorded a strikeout to end the frame.

Custer was one of five Green pitchers used in the game, going two innings while allowing five walks, three hits and striking out four. Only one of the six runs scored off of Custer was earned.

Gray extended their lead in the fourth inning, sending nine batters to the plate in the process and recording three more walks.

Wolf was the offensive spur once again, driving the ball to left field for a two RBI double and an 8-2 lead. Bennett Burcar grounded the ball to second in the next at-bat, but an error allowed the ninth Gray run to score.

Wolf went 3 for 3 at the plate with four RBIs, while Bennett Burcar was 0 for 2 with two RBIs and a strikeout. Bennett Burcar also went on to pitch the final two innings for the Gray, giving up three walks, six hits and four runs while striking out one batter.

A top-heavy lineup led Gray and forced Green to use five pitchers, but not all were ineffective.

Clark Rotroff pitched in relief of Custer and recorded four strikeouts and no runs in 1 1/3 innings of work. Nolan Ragan later had three strikeouts of his own in 1 1/3 innings.

Extra player Brody Lawson pitched to one batter as well and struck him out on three pitches. Afterwards he flexed toward the crowd and his dugout and provided a spark to the Green going into their final at-bat down eight runs.

Lawson's motivation carried on through the final inning as the Green clawed their way back a base hit at a time.

Hunter McLaughlin's began the final frame, a double to left field.

A walk to Ryder Ziegler and an RBI single from Custer drove in the first Green runs in an attempt to rally. Ryder Espinoza and Tanner Manny each recorded RBI hits to draw closer to the Gray, but a mound visit allowed Bennet Burcar to reset and focus on setting down the final few batters.

"Give credit to Green," Shane Burcar said. "They made that comeback, but I liked how we took a deep breath and then got the last out."

The Gray's 9-6 victory punched them into the Majors City Championship on Tuesday.

WFL Camo defeats CLL Serpientes, 14-10

Both winning teams on Friday were outhit by three, but that did not bother either set of victors.

CLL Serpientes recorded 10 hits, with a pair coming early in the game as they took a commanding 4-0 lead to begin the festivities.

Sawyer Turley and Brock Rusconi each walked to begin the Serpientes half of the first, then first baseman Boston Brawley knocked a single into center field to give the Serpientes their first run of the game.

A subsequent groundout from Zane Skinner and a double from Jerimyah Rodriguez plated the next two runs. An error on a ground ball hit by Tatum Henderson drove in the fourth Serpientes run of the inning, giving them a lead that appeared insurmountable until the Camo bats caught fire.

Rusconi kept WFLC Camo silent in the first inning, striking out three consecutive batters after walking the leadoff man. However, WFLC Camo slowly crept back into the game, scoring two runs each in the second and third innings.

Charles Frye and Braxton DeRosa scored for Camo in the second after a hit by pitch and single respectively. Rusconi was wild to begin his second frame, but brought his focus back to the plate and struck out two while limiting the Camo damage.

The top of the third inning began with an easy out for Rusconi, but Camo No. 2 hitter Riley Johnson quickly shifted momentum back in his team's favor by reaching third base after an error in left field. A groundout from Jeremy Keck would score Johnson the following at-bat.

WFLC Camo tied the game 4-4 two batters later when Charles Frye ripped a base hit into left field to score Rudy Galaviz, who had singled. Quick reactions from CLL Serpientes on defense allowed them to cut down Frye at second base while trying to extend the hit into a double. The throw from the cutoff man was enough to halt the Camo in their tracks while the Serpientes regrouped.

The comeback was one that pleased Camo head coach Kevin Keck, but his team's early game woes were not all too unfamiliar.

"The first inning has been our nemesis all year," Keck said. "Give my kids credit -- they bounced back, chipped away and we were able to get the job done."

On the opposing side, Johnson toed the rubber for the Camo with purpose following a shaky first inning. Johnson responded with five strikeouts through 3 2/3 innings of work, three coming in the innings following his team's rally from behind. He would finish the game allowing four runs on seven hits and three walks.

The tie ball game did not last for long.

Jeremiah Rodriguez once again came around to score after a walk, this time giving his team a 5-4 lead. Kaden Henry was the player to drive Rodriguez in, sharply hitting a ball into right-center field immediately after his coach gave him pointers from the third base coaches box. Henry trotted into second with a RBI double, but it was all the Serpientes could muster in their half of the third inning.

WFLC Camo did not stay behind for long, responding with seven runs in the fourth to take an 11-5 lead, their largest of the game.

The team sent 11 batters to the plate in the inning, highlighted by two-out RBI hits from Landon Brown and Galviz. Brown stepped up first, facing a new pitcher in Brawley who had retired the first batter he faced. On a 1-1 count Brown striped the ball into center field, scoring two and retaking the lead for the Camo, 6-5. Brown ended the game 1 for 2 with two RBIs, two runs scored, a walk and a strikeout.

The clean-up hitter Galviz tacked on more runs later in the inning with a hard-hit ball that could not be fielded by the shortstop. The play scored two more runs and continued the carousel of Camo hitters to cross the plate in the inning.

Brawley was able to record the final out of the inning, but did not return to the mound.

CLL Serpientes did not stay quiet after the eruption of Camo runs.

The Serpientes responded with three runs in the fourth and two in the fifth, but it was not enough to take down the Camo. Despite being eliminated, the Serpientes saw bright performances from many of their young players.

Henry pitched two innings to complement his RBI hit at the plate. He allowed just one hit and two walks, while also recording two strikeouts in a shutdown inning of work. In that inning Henry threw nine pitches, eight for strikes.

Rodriguez and Brawley saw the ball well at the plate. Each ended the game with two runs scored, two RBIs and two hits.

Three more runs in the top of the sixth inning gave the Camo all the padding they needed going into the final frame. A double to left field from DeRosa netted the final two runs for the Camo, while three strikeouts from Kingston Carrilo secured a 14-10 victory.

Kevin Keck called Carrilo “cool as a summer rain” in his first appearance on the mound this season. The left fielder threw two innings of three-hit, two-run baseball to close out the game and help the Camo advance to the loser's bracket final against WFL Green.

DeRosa and Frye were catalysts for the Camo, going 3 for 4 and 2 for 2 at the plate respectively. Derosa added to his day with two runs scored and a RBI, while Frye scored a run and recorded two RBIs.

#### MORE INFORMATION



Gallery: West Flagstaff Gray beats West Flagstaff Green to reach championship round of City Majors Tournament

WFL Gray crowned Majors city champion over WFL Camo

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