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ALERT FEATURED TOP STORY

WFLC Camo defeats WFLC Green to advance to championship round

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West Flagstaff Little League Camo defeated West Flagstaff Little League Green, 11-9, at Dawson Field on Saturday to advance to the 2024 Majors City Championship. The teams were returning to the field less than 24 hours after a win over Continental Little League Gold and loss against WFLC Gray, respectively.

A warm day on the field heated up both teams' bats, as 11 runs came across home plate in the first inning of play.

As the lower seed, WFLC Camo stepped to the plate first and took an early 2-0 lead before the chalk settled on the base lines. WFLC Green starting pitcher Clark Rotroff recorded a quick one-pitch out to start the game, but walks to Riley Johanson and Rudy Galaviz of the Camo, along with a speedy Jeremy Keck reaching base to stop a double play, set up Charles Frye for the games' first big hit.

Frye laced a double into left field, driving in two and giving the Camo an early advantage.

The lead did not last long as the Green immediately pushed back in the bottom of the first.

Carson Abby began the bottom half swinging at the first pitch for a base hit. Deegan Custer followed suit with another hit on the first pitch. Ryder Espinoza was next and without hesitation swung at the third pitch of the inning, successfully reaching base and plating Abby for his team's first run.

Benjamin Askew attacked the Camo pitcher, Frye, on the first pitch as well, ripping a line-drive double to left field to score Custer.

Askew and Espinoza each ended the game going 2 for 3 with two hits, an RBI and a run scored. Karmelo Serna's RBI base hit ended Frye's outing on the mound.

The carousel of Green batters continued as the first six players in the lineup reached base with a hit or walk and eventually came around to score. A strikeout of the seventh batter momentarily halted the Green before the next three hitters reached and scored.

WFLC Green sent 14 batters to the plate in the first inning, batting around their entire order for the first time all season. Tanner Manny and Elliott Castillo also recorded their only hit, run and RBI in the extended inning.

Nine hits plated nine runs for the Green and seven players recorded RBIs as they led 9-2 after one inning.

Frye faced 10 batters, but was unable to record more than one out, leading the way for Landon Brown to come on in relief much earlier than Camo head coach Kevin Keck would have liked.

Brown allowed two more hits in the inning, but stopped the Green from putting the game out of reach.

The Camo pitcher settled in after the first, facing no more than five batters in every inning he pitched. In 5.2 innings pitched he allowed 10 hits and struck out four while allowing no walks or runs. Power pitching was not Brown's forte; instead, his ability to throw strikes kept his opponent at bay as the Green could only muster soft contact after their explosive first inning.

Brown had previously closed out games for the Camo and Kevin Keck had full confidence in riding with his young pitcher for as long as he could.

"I was expecting him to pitch well, but I wasn't expecting him to shut them down," Kevin Keck said.

Behind a strong outing from Brown, the Camo slowly crept back into the game one inning at a time.

Brown helped himself in the second inning, walking and coming around to score on an RBI base hit from Cole Joralmon.

WFLC Camo plated three more runs in the third by playing small ball.

Jeremy Keck, Galaviz and Frye began the top half of the third with three consecutive base hits, giving Cannon Nabours an opportunity to drive in one run with a hit to center field. A double steal attempt of second and home caught the

Green off guard, plating another run in Frye, but Nabors was cut down at second as his teammate scored.

After three innings it appeared that momentum was starting to shift as the Camo had cut the deficit to 9-6.

Kevin Keck once again was stumped by his team's first inning struggles, but gave his players credit for the fight they put up throughout the rest of the game.

"We're just a little flat when we show up," Kevin Keck said. "And again, it's 10-, 11-, 12-year-old kids, I think it's just human nature. But we get locked in the second inning for some reason and we go to battle, we don't quit, so I couldn't be prouder of these kids."

WFLC Green threatened to score again in the fourth inning with runners on second and third with only one out. However, the threat quickly dissipated with two flyouts to center fielder Rudy Galaviz.

The first was routine, but the final out of the inning was driven deep to the warning track in right-center off the bat of Espinoza. Galaviz backpedaled and tracked it just short of the outfield fence, where he tumbled down with the ball secured in his glove.

When he popped back up with the ball, everyone in attendance was ecstatic. The catch prevented two Green runs from scoring and propelled the Camo into an electric fifth inning.

Jeremy Keck reached on a hit-by-pitch to begin his team's half of the fifth. Galaviz singled once again following Keck, leading to three of the next four Camo hitters reaching base via a walk or error. Keck, Galaviz and all three Camo batters came around to score, giving the Camo a five-run fifth inning and a 11-9 lead heading into the final frame.

WFLC Camo's offensive onslaught was propelled by Frye all game. Frye was 3 for 4 with a run scored and three RBIs. Braxton DeRosa was another catalyst, driving in two RBIs. Joralmon's presence was also key at the bottom of the lineup as he went 2 for 3 at the plate with three RBIs.

On top of his pitching performance, Brown's two walks also resulted in two runs scored for the Camo.

WFLC Green continued its attempt to rally in the sixth inning, with two batters reaching base and advancing to second and third with two outs. This brought Ryder Ziegler, the winning run, to the plate.

Ziegler hit the ball hard to shortstop Jeremy Keck, but he was playing just short of the infield grass and handled the ball with grace before throwing it across the diamond to secure a Camo victory.

Despite fighting back from down seven runs in the first inning, Kevin Keck was most impressed with his team's hustle and ability to play hearty defense when the time called for it.

"We made plays in the outfield that were unbelievable, the shortstop made a great play there at the end. That's what you need," he said. "You got to make plays to win games, and we made the plays today."

In the losing dugout, the Green head coach Jimmy Custer was upset about the come-from-behind loss, but was proud of his team's improvement over the course of the season.

Custer also found solace in his team's effort and attitude through the game and season. He especially credited his pitchers for good outings, some of whom had not pitched before this season.

Clark Rotroff started for the Green, striking out two and allowing five earned runs, three walks and seven hits in 2.1 innings. Nolan Ragan came on in relief of Rotroff, striking out four, walking three and allowing two hits and no earned runs in 2.1 innings pitched.

Espinoza saw time on the bump to end the game, giving up no runs and two hits while striking out two in 1.1 innings.

"I was very happy with our pitching," Jimmy Custer said. "A lot of these guys that had never pitched before came in and threw strikes and I was proud of them. Everybody gave it their effort, everybody was in the dugout cheering hard, and that's what I love as a coach -- is attitude and effort. That's my two big keys and this team brought it today."

The Green season ended on Saturday, but the Camo victory pushes them into the championship game on Tuesday where they will play WFLC Gray to decide who will be crowned Majors City champs.

WFLC Camo will have to defeat the Gray twice in the double-elimination bracket to claim victory, a feat that was accomplished in last year's tournament by Josh Clouse's CLL Gold.

PREVIOUS GAMES

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 WFLC Gray rolled past WFLC Green 9-6 on its way to the championship round.

WFLC Gray defeats WFLC 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.

WFLC 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 Galviz, 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.

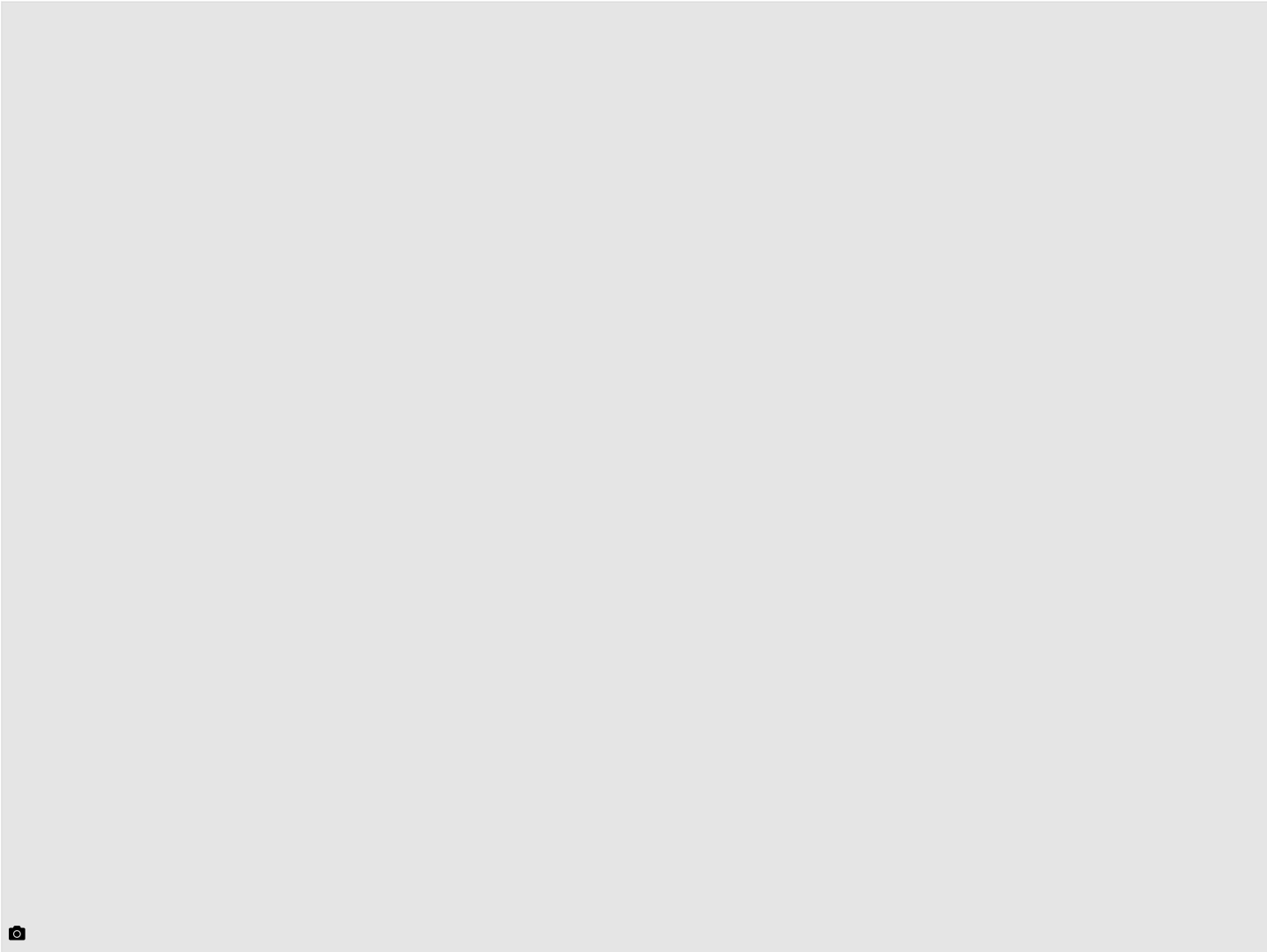
Rodriguez and Brawley saw the ball well at the plate. Each ended the game with two runs scored, two RBIs and two hits.

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 WFLC 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



WFLC Gray crowned Majors city champion over WFLC Camo

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