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## WFL Gray crowned Majors city champion over WFL Camo

NATHAN ECKER Special to the Daily Sun  
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WFL Camo's Landon Brown waits for the ball as WFL Gray's Grayson Wolfe (44) sprints to tag first base Tuesday night out on the play.

Jake Bacon, Arizona Daily Sun

Dawson Field was deafening on Tuesday night as West Flagstaff Little League Gray was crowned champions of the Majors City Tournament over WFLC Camo.

Camo went into the night needing to win two games to overtake the No. 1-seeded Gray. They won the first matchup 12-3, but the Gray bats heated up in game two en route to an 11-3 championship victory.



West Flagstaff Little League Gray emerges as the champions of the Majors City Tournament, beating WFLC Camo in the final.

Nathan Ecker, Arizona Daily Sun

The winning team also out-hit their opponent in each game. WFLC Camo had 12 hits to Gray's three in game one, while the Gray out-hit the Camo 8-7 in game two.

Despite the high-scoring affairs, neither team could break away right out of the gates.

Game one began with a plethora of fielding mistakes that resulted in a 1-1 tie after the first inning.

A walk to Camo catcher Riley Johanson marked the first baserunner of the night. He was quickly put away on a ground ball by Jeremy Keck, but throwing errors while trying to turn the double play on Keck allowed the speedy youngster to round the bases and score the game's first run.

Gray redeemed itself defensively on the third out of the inning by nabbing Charles Frye at second while he tried to advance on a throwing error. They quickly responded in the bottom half of the first off Keck, who



pitched 4 1/3 innings and allowed six walks, two hits and no earned runs while striking out five.

WFLC Camo's Jeremy Keck pitches Tuesday night during a Majors City Tournament title game against WFLC Gray.

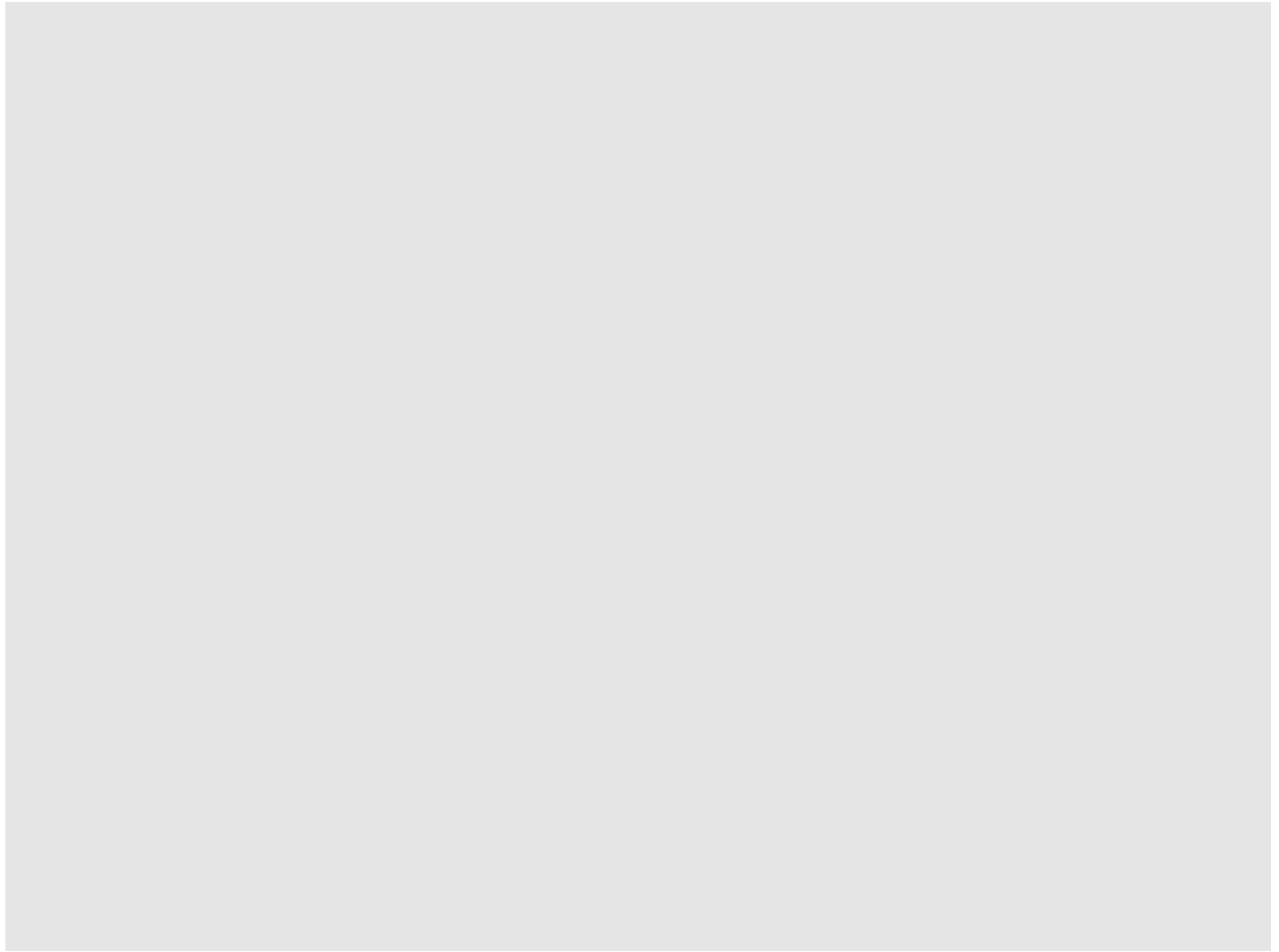
Jake Bacon, Arizona Daily Sun

Boone Salyer was the first Gray baserunner of the night after recording a walk. He soon crossed the plate to tie the game when Grayson Wolfe ripped the ball into right field, where it could not be fielded cleanly.

Three batters reached base safely for the Camo in the second inning, led by a Braxton DeRosa base hit. Four batters later, Landon Brown stepped to the plate with the bases loaded. Brown was able to make contact, pushing the ball to second base and beating the double play attempt, allowing DeRosa to score from third.

The Gray showed patience in their second turn to bat, working three full counts and walking each time, but Keck held steady and retained a 2-1 lead after two innings.

Salyer, the Gray starting pitcher, controlled the third inning on both ends. He held Camo scoreless for the first time in the game, allowing just one base runner, a Keck single. A crafty snag on a line drive from shortstop Matteo Vargas also aided Keck in his scoreless frame.



West Flagstaff Little League Gray's Boone Salyer pitches during a Majors City Tournament championship game against WFLl Camo Tuesday night at Dawson Field.

Jake Bacon, Arizona Daily Sun

Salyer began the next half with a base hit, eventually scoring on an RBI single from Jayden Hermansky. Hermansky's hit also plated Bennett Burcar, who had reached on a walk.

The heroics from Hermansky were enough to give the Gray a 3-2 lead after three innings of play, but it was the last time they would score in the game.

WFLl Camo batted around their order and sent 11 batters to the plate in the fourth inning. They also recorded six hits and scored six runs, taking a commanding 8-3 lead in game one.

Once again a DeRosa single began the inning. This time he chopped the ball to Vargas at shortstop, who reached far to his right to grab it, but DeRosa legged out the throw.

Five of the next six Camo hitters reached base, four with base hits.

Brown drove in DeRosa with his first of two hits and second RBI in game one. Kingston Carillo then brought Cole Joralmon home.

But the biggest swing of the inning came off the bat of Johanson with the bases loaded.

The Camo catcher placed a ball on the ground into center field with two strikes where it was misplayed, allowing all three base runners to score and Johanson to reach third base. A groundout from Keck on the next pitch scored Johanson as the eighth Camo run.

Keck returned to the mound in the bottom of the fourth, making quick work of the bottom of the Gray order while notching two strikeouts.

He later extended his team's lead in the sixth inning with a bases-clearing triple, plating Brown, Carillo and Johanson after three consecutive singles. The triple gave Keck five RBIs in the game to go along with two hits and two runs scored in four plate appearances.

Johanson and Carillo were catalysts at the top of the Camo order as well, each scoring two runs and adding two base hits. Carillo plated one RBI of his own, while Johanson added two RBIs and a walk to his game one stat line.

Frye drove in the fourth run of the sixth inning — and the 12th of the game from the Camo — on a flyout to left field that Keck was able to tag up and score on.

Cannon Nabours pitched the final 1 2/3 innings of baseball in game one following Keck, allowing just one hit and one walk to close out the 12-3 victory.

Camo manager coach Kevin Keck was impressed with his team's performance in game one and felt confident going into game two, but his team was thin on the mound with their seventh game in eight days fast approaching.

“First game I thought we played as well as we could,” Kevin Keck said. “Hit the ball all over the field and played really solid defense and got it done. Felt confident going into the second game, just ran a little thin on pitching, and give those guys credit -- they were the better team in the second game.”

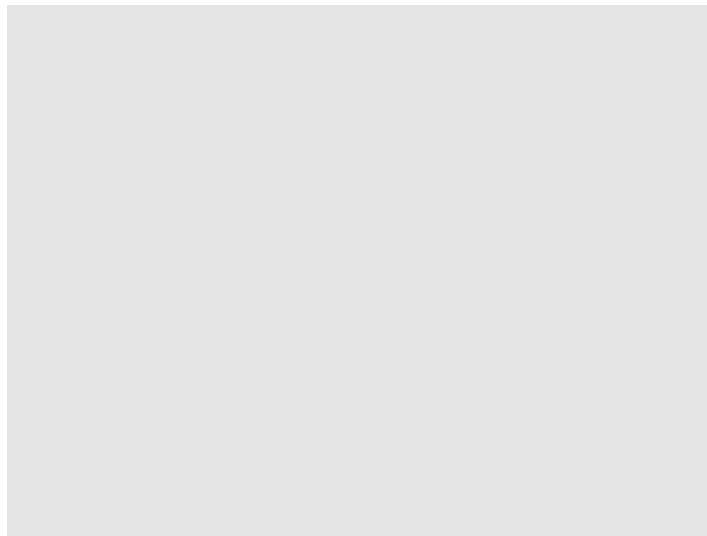
Game two began in similar fashion to its predecessor.

Camo hit first and picked up where they left off in game one. Vargas — the game two starting pitcher for the Gray — forced a groundout from Carillo to record the game's first out, then chaos ensued.

Johanson, Keck and Rudy Galaviz all singled in early counts to load the bases for Frye.

Frye swung at strike one, but then sent the second pitch back where it came from up the middle of the field. The hit scored two runs, giving Frye two RBIs and Camo a 2-0 lead before Gray had an at-bat.

The Gray players were not down for long, sending eight batters to the plate in the bottom of the first, seven of which reached base safely.



WFLl Camo's Riley Johanson catches a pitch as Gray's Sean Severance watches the path of the ball at Tuesday night at Dawson Field.

Jake Bacon, Arizona Daily Sun

Vargas began the Gray half of the inning with a base hit and eventually came around to score on a bases-loaded fielder's choice off the bat of Wolfe. Wolfe reached first base safely, but the Camo defense reacted quickly in response to aggressive base running on the play to secure two outs. The trail runner Riley Bruce was thrown out at second base for the first out, then an accurate throw from Nabours to Johanson at the plate cut down an enthusiastic Salyer racing home.

Thanks to timely defense the Camo lead was safe for the time being, but a hard single off the bat of Bennett Burcar rolled past the left fielder, plating Wolfe from first base and allowing Burcar to reach third. An impassioned Burcar popped up from his slide at third screaming at his dugout, his voice cutting through the raucous crowd.

Burcar then scored on a Hermansky grounder to shortstop that could not be fielded cleanly.

After all was said and done in the first inning, the Gray led 3-2.

The first five in the Gray order — Vargas, Salyer, Bruce, Wolfe and Bennett Burcar — combined for six hits, three RBIs and nine runs scored in game two. WFLl Gray skipper Shane Burcar applauded his top of the order players, four of whom are only 10 years old.

“Those guys are ballers, that’s what they do,” Shane Burcar said.

Pitching dominated the second inning. Both starting pitchers, Carillo for the Camo and Vargas for the Gray, struck out two and set down the side in order.

They continued into the third inning, but with mixed results.

Camo found more hard contact off Vargas in the third, beginning with a Carillo lineout that was snagged by Bennett Burcar. However, it was Johanson and a triple over the head of the right fielder that would lead to the final Camo run of the game.

Keck followed with a sacrifice fly to center field, scoring Johanson and momentarily tying the game at three.

In the bottom of the third inning it was Vargas' time to help himself out and he did so with a leadoff double. Carillo recorded an out on the next batter, but errors and timely hitting pushed Gray far ahead. The next six batters safely reached base, five of which scored.

Key hits in the inning came off the bats off Bennett Burcar and Parker Sparks. The former hit a single to score Wolfe and Sparks plated the rest with a triple into the right field corner. That unloaded the bases and gave Gray a 9-3 lead.

Sparks ended his game two going 2 for 2 at the plate with three RBIs and a run scored.

Three batters later, a passed ball with Dylan Carpenter at the plate almost allowed a seventh Gray run to score, but the catcher Johanson was quick to recover the ball bouncing off the backstop and lunged toward the plate to tag out a hustling Hunter Hagerman attempting to score.

As Camo sought a comeback, Vargas settled down and worked through the next two innings with relative ease.

Back-to-back singles from Frye and DeRosa to lead off the fourth inning was the most danger Vargas found himself in following his team's six-run third. Through five innings of work, Vargas allowed three runs on seven hits and one walk, while striking out seven.

Vargas completed the fifth inning with 84 pitches, giving him the availability to pitch to one more batter in the sixth, but it was not necessary.



Salyer began the bottom of the fifth with a base hit. Bruce followed him with a chopper back to the mound, but the throw to first was off line, letting Salyer score and Bruce advance to third with no outs.

With the score 10-3, Bruce being at third meant that the Gray were a hit away from run-ruling the Camo in five innings. The run rule in the Majors tournament states that a game ends if a team leads by eight or more runs after five innings.

Wolfe was next with the walk-off opportunity; with a full count he put the ball on the ground to score Bruce and secure a 11-3 game two victory and the championship.

Shane Burcar worried about his team's state of mind following game one -- which prompted Major League Baseball doubleheader comparisons and the idea that the moment can be a big lesson for many young players

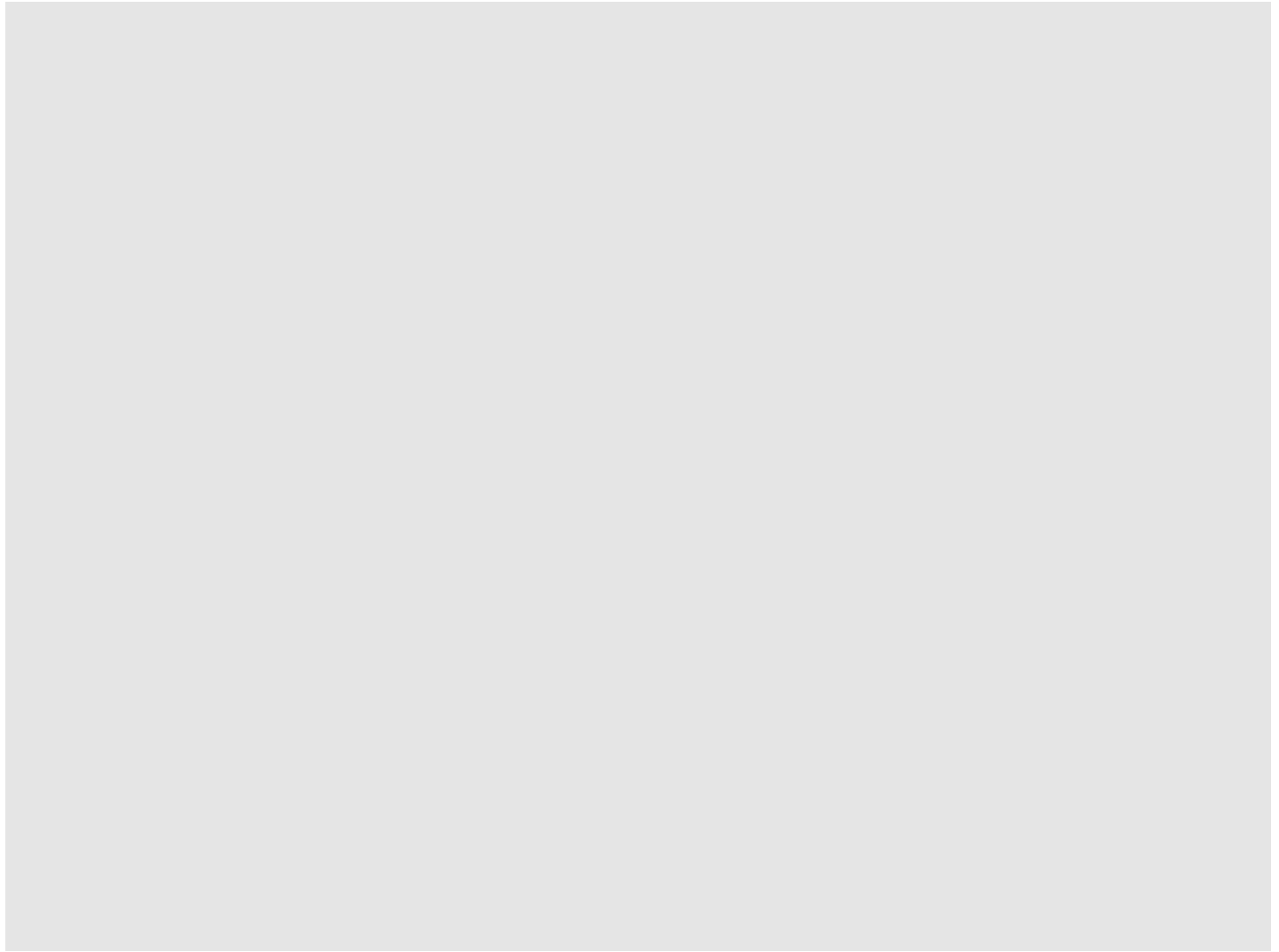
"I liked how our guys competed and flushed the first game," Shane Burcar said. "I talked to them after like, 'How are we going to take advantage of our time in the next game.' Get over the first game and move on and hopefully these kids learn that and it's a life lesson for them."

Outside of the games, the manager also commended the fans who stayed loud and supported each team during the tournament.

Continental Little League came home with the Majors City trophy against a West Flagstaff team last year while West Flagstaff was the host. This year it was Continental that played host to a championship with two West Flagstaff teams.

"What impressed me the most outside of baseball is how the community came out and supported everybody," Shane Burcar said. "I like how two West Flag teams were in the championship and still Continental was out here supporting."

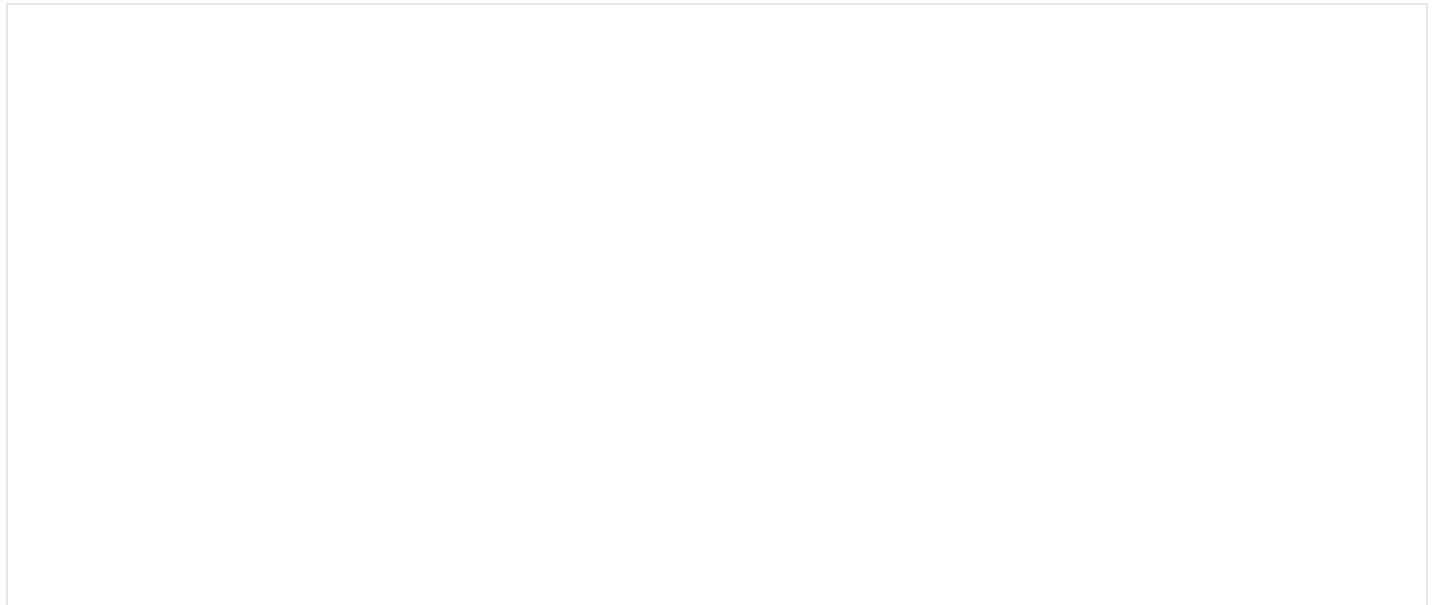
All-star tournaments for several divisions will begin later this month.



Members of the West Flagstaff Little League Gray team pose with their trophy after emerging as the champions of the Majors City Tournament.

Nathan Ecker, Arizona Daily Sun

## MORE INFORMATION





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