

Local Legion Players Shine at All-Star Game

Seven Springfield Post 176 baseball players are represented at Fourth of July showcase.

BY RICH SANDERS
THE CONNECTION

Several members of the Springfield Post 176 American Legion baseball team made contributions for the winning team at last Sunday's District 17 Fourth of July All-Star Game. The annual holiday showcase game took place at Vienna's Waters Field. The mid-season exhibition began at 11 a.m. and went on into the early afternoon.

Seven Springfield Post 176 players were members of the National All-Stars team, which, in front of a large, festive crowd, soundly defeated the American All-Stars, 12-1.

Post 176's representatives in the game were: catcher Nathan Slater, pitcher Brennan Miller, shortstop Jake Boswell, outfielder John Ponton, pitcher Shannon

Smith, outfielder Joe Townsend and outfielder Nick Digby.

Springfield Post 176 Manager Al Vaxmonsky was a member of the National All-Stars' coaching staff.

Miller, a 2009 South County Secondary graduate, was the Nationals' starting pitcher and tossed one shutout inning, striking out three and allowing two hits. Also seeing mound work was Digby, also a 2009 South County graduate, who tossed one shutout inning with two strikeouts and a walk.

Digby, who plays collegiate baseball at North Carolina Wesleyan, did not pitch over the first half of the season for Post 176. But he got a chance to show his stuff in the All-Star affair.

"Nick faced some pretty good hitters," said Vaxmonsky, of Digby's one inning of work. "He was throwing the ball with some velocity and surprised some guys. He had a

good little curve ball too. I told him after the game, 'We'll definitely look for situations to use you [in the season's second half.] He seemed relaxed and in control in the All-Star game.'

Digby, an outfielder at Wesleyan, pitched three innings for the Battling Bishops this past spring season.

At the plate on Sunday, Digby smacked a two-run triple in the second inning to make the score 5-0 Nationals.

"That was really the key blow," said Vaxmonsky, of the extra base hit that kept the Nats' team well in the driver's seat.

Other Springfield base hits in the win came from Ponton, Townsend and Boswell, all with singles.

Boswell, who graduated from Lee High School last month, played the entire game at shortstop. He came up with one of the game's best defensive plays when he dove to his left to glove a groundball before making a toss to second base for the force out.

The legion All-Star game usually gener



PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

Jake Boswell played the entire game at shortstop for the National All-Stars.

SEE NO HOMERS. PAGE 15

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

No Homers, But Plenty of Runs for All Stars

FROM PAGE 14

ates a few home runs, but the Nationals did not hit any despite all their runs. The Americans' lone run came in the bottom of the ninth inning as the result of a Nationals' error.

"The pitching certainly was key," said Vaxmonsky, of the Nationals' dominating showing. "There were no home runs, which is surprising at [homer friendly] Waters Field. Homers usually fly out of that place. But that's a testimony to our pitching."

Vaxmonsky was pleased with the play of his Post 176 team members at the All-Star game.

"I think they played superb, they really did," he said. "All-Star games bring out the best talent in the league and for [the Post 176 players] to shine is a real tribute to them. To stand out in a game like that means a lot to a kid."

On Tuesday, Post 176 won its first game following the All-Star break — a slugfest 19-12 win over first place Vienna Post 180 in a game played at Lee High School. Springfield (13-7), which was tied for second place in the league standings going into the game with Vienna, trailed 3-0 early before breaking out for seven, third inning



PHOTO BY CRAIG STERBUTZEL/THE CONNECTION

Joe Townsend of Springfield Post 176 waits for the pitch during Sunday's Fourth of July District 17 American Legion All-Star baseball game at Waters Field in Vienna.

runs.

"At that point it was who wanted it most," said Vaxmonsky, whose team never lost the lead. "We showed some grit because they made a few runs at us."

Sean Ruggles pitched well in the win and the Springfield bats did some big time damage behind huge games from Shannon Smith (four hits, including two doubles and five RBIs), Townsend (two hits), Ponton

"Homers usually fly out of that place."

— Post 176 Manager Al Vaxmonsky

(three hits) and Digby (three hits, including a double and triple, five RBIs). °

During the season's first half, Springfield had lost all three games it played against Vienna — the setbacks coming by scores of 3-2, 7-5 and 18-11. But Post 176 finally notched a "W" against the District 17 leaders on Tuesday.

"I told them before the game Vienna is a playoff caliber team and we need the game to stay in second place," said Vaxmonsky, whose team was tied for second with Arlington Post 139 going into the contest.

Springfield, which at one point this season was 6-6, is scheduled to play Alexandria Post 24 on Thursday evening, July 8 at Hayfield High School. On Sunday, July 11 at 2 p.m., Post 176 will play Post 1976, made up of players from Annandale High and Lake Braddock Secondary schools. The game is tentatively scheduled to take place at Oakton High School, although Vaxmonsky is trying to switch the game to a location closer to home.

Three Seniors, One Freshman Snag Record