

JENNIE FINCH INVITATIONAL, ALL SKILLS CLINIC TAKE CENTER STAGE

By Bob Behre

Diamond Nation becomes a little slice of softball heaven this weekend when the legendary Jennie Finch arrives Friday for the 3rd Annual All Skills Clinic, followed by the Finch Invitational tournament on Saturday and Sunday.

Jennie Finch and the Finch's Aces coaching staff will conduct the All Skills Clinic for 8-14 year olds at 6 p.m.-8 p.m. on Friday at Diamond Nation. Then 76 softball teams will take the field on Saturday morning for the two-day Jennie Finch Invitational. Championship hardware will be awarded in the 10U, 12U and 14U age brackets.

"I always look forward to my visit to Diamond Nation and the Finch Invitational each spring," said Finch. "And I'm excited to work directly with the girls again in the All Skills Clinic and watch them put their skills to work in the Invitational."

The 10U and 12U brackets begin play at 8 a.m. on Saturday and the 14U field gets underway at 12:40 p.m. that day.

Four intriguing matchups kickoff the **10U Jennie Finch Invitational** at 8 a.m. on Saturday. The Empire State Huskies face Bombers Elite, Jersey Flames square off with NW Explosion, Jersey Girls meet NJ Mystics and Banshees Red tangles with the Long Island Thunder.

The 12-team 10U Jennie Finch Invitational playoffs begins at 2:10 p.m. Sunday with first round play. The second round starts at 3:40 p.m. before the playoff winds down to the semifinals on Field 4A and 4B at 5:30 p.m. The 10U championship game will be played at 7 p.m. on Field 6.

The Finch's Aces 10U, NJ Vipers, ASBA Downingtown and Team Long Island fill out a deep 10U tournament field.

The **12U Jennie Finch Invitational** field gets jump started with eight games at 8 a.m. on Saturday. You may want to catch a pair of strong openers that feature NW Explosion vs. West Warwick Warriors on Field 6 and the Finch's Aces 12U vs. Langhorne Lightning on Field 2.

The 40-team 12U Jennie Finch Invitational tournament will be pared down to 20 teams for the playoffs, which begins Sunday morning. There will be separate Blue and Red championship brackets. The first round games will be played at 8 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. The 12U tournament moves on to the quarterfinals at 11 a.m. and 12:40 p.m.

The 12U bracket playoffs continue with the semifinals at 2:10 p.m. and 3:40 p.m. before the tournament concludes with the Blue and Red championship games, on Fields 6 and 2 respectively, at 5:30 p.m.

The Black Diamonds, NJ Venom, Jersey Girls, Fury Fastpitch, two NJ Vipers entries, the Pennsbury Gems and the South Jersey Mystics are a few other quality teams that help round out this impressive field.

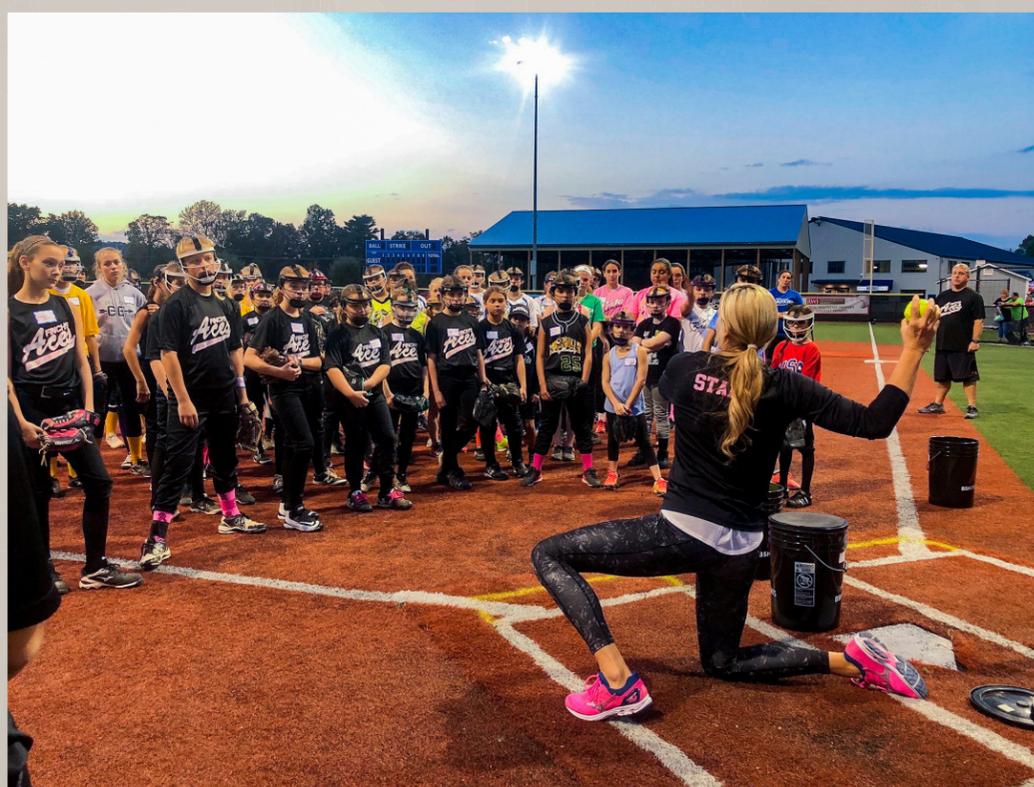
The **14U Jennie Finch Invitational** begins play at 12:40 p.m. on Saturday with a pair of games on Diamond Nation's small diamonds. NJ Heist Futures plays PA Extreme 14U Futures in an opener on Field 6 and CLCF Bombers take on Team Nitro Long Island on Field 2.

The 24-team 14U Jennie Finch Invitational playoffs begins with first round games at 11 a.m. and 12:40 p.m. on Sunday. There will be a few second round playoff games also at 12:40 p.m. and the rest will be played beginning at 2:10 p.m. The 14U tournament quarterfinals will be held at 3:40 p.m. before the tournament swings into the semifinals at 5:30 p.m. on Fields 1A and 1B.

The 14U tournament championship game is set for a 7 p.m. start on Field 2.

The Finch's Aces 14U, Infinity Shock, NJ Fight, Long Island Surge, NJ Pride, NJ Venom, OC Bombers, Team Nitro Long Island and two teams from the South Jersey Pride program bolster yet another deep tournament field.

See you all at the Jennie Finch Invitational!



JERSEY SPORTS ZONE MAKES QUICK IN-ROADS IN NJ'S SPORTS SCENE

By Bob Behre

Anyone who has attended a high school sporting event in the Garden State the past two years has had a very good chance of seeing a reporter and photographer from the talented staff of Jersey Sports Zone.

Borne from a successful start in the Shore Conference sports scene, Jersey Sports Zone has spread its wings throughout New Jersey to the benefit of the state's athletes and sports fans.

"We've been covering high school sports across the state for the past two years," says Rich Chrampanis, Jersey Sports Zone's chief operating officer. "We started as a beta test in the Shore Conference three years prior and the success our our product encouraged us to expand statewide."

There has certainly been a bit of a hole in high school sports coverage in New Jersey with the shrinking sports sections in newspapers over the years and a dearth of coverage by television outlets. "The media coverage of high school sports has been in sharp decline in recent years and our team saw a great need to fill a void," said Chrampanis. "In many states, local television coverage of big high school sporting events is the norm. In New Jersey, it simply doesn't exist thanks to the New York and Philadelphia television markets focusing solely on professional sports."

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JERSEY SPORTS ZONE (continued from front page)

Jersey Sports Zone brings its cameras to football and soccer games in the fall, basketball, hockey and wrestling in the winter and baseball, softball and lacrosse games in the spring. Its multimedia coverage is ever expanding to the benefit of its audience and sponsors. The company boasts 7 million video views. "We've been able to give our sponsors a highly visibility platform to align with us and show our loyal and passionate audience that they are supporting their hometown team," says Chrampanis.

And Jersey Sports Zone is still looking to bring more to its viewers around the state. "We are going to expand our site soon with an alumni section that tracks the progress of the players we covered in New Jersey as they excel in college and the pros," says Chrampanis.

Jersey Sports Zone had two videos aired on ESPN SportsCenter in 2019. Delbarton hockey star Michael Balzarotti made a leaping on ice move past a defender and fired an amazing shot for a goal. That was the No. 3 play of the day on SportsCenter's Top 10 on Feb. 13. On March 10, Moorestown basketball player Jagger Zrada's crossover move was the No. 2 play of the day.

"It's proof positive of our mission to bring a new level of exposure to high school athletes," says Chrampanis. "We have had other videos in the past two years that have gone viral on such popular outlets as House of Highlights, Fox Sports, CBS Sports, and Yahoo."

Jersey Sports Zone and Diamond Nation have formed an outstanding partnership.

"It reminds me of the partnership we have with the New Jersey Devils," says Chrampanis, "The Devils roll out the red carpet to give high school hockey players in New Jersey a special experience. Our partnership with Diamond Nation is going to allow us to shine a spotlight on great high school baseball in the Garden State. Diamond Nation is the gold standard when it comes to baseball facilities. It is an organization that is the ultimate promoter of baseball at the youth and high school levels."

Jersey Sports Zone is certainly capturing moments in a young athlete's life every day that, because of its coverage, will last forever.

"Our team knows that, any given moment, our cameras can capture something truly special," says Chrampanis. "The best compliment we receive is when an athlete or a parent tells us they feel like they are watching ESPN when they see our coverage."

In two short years, Jersey Sports Zone has captured future MLB, NBA and NFL stars learning the ropes on New Jersey's athletic fields, diamonds, courts and ice rinks. But, as Chrampanis says, there is an even bigger element to the company's excellent coverage.

"We also capture the moments when a player, who will not play beyond high school, gets a walk-off hit or sinks a game-winning shot. For every superstar we cover, we also capture the 'one shining moment' of the average varsity athlete, moments that will stay with them forever."



BRONX BOMBERS GRAB EASTER EXTRAVAGANZA CHAMPIONSHIP



By Bob Behre

Jayden Asencio rocked a shot over the right fielder's head to score the winning run in walk-off fashion as the Bronx Bombers defeated Canes Mid-Atlantic, 5-4 in eight innings, in the 14U Easter Extravaganza championship game on Saturday.

The Bombers have come crashing out of the gate at the start of spring with a 12-1 record and three straight tournament championships.

While the Bronx Bombers' bats have yet to fully unleash, the team's pitching staff has clearly picked up the slack in the interim. Righthander Bryan Santana was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player after his outstanding pitching performance in the final. The Bombers allowed just nine runs in their four Easter Extravaganza games and boast a team ERA below a run in game in 13 games.

"We expected our hitting to carry us," said Bombers coach Eric Semler, the head and founder of the organization. "Our hitting has been flat but we really are a good hitting team. Thankfully our pitchers have been great." Keith Del Valle is the 14U Bronx Bombers head coach and has been instrumental in the team's success.

The championship game was a seesaw battle between two top programs and the Canes struck first, opening up a 3-0 lead on the Bombers in the top of the first inning. But the top-seeded Bombers rallied for two runs in the third inning and tied the game with a run in the bottom of the sixth. Once the game remained tied through seven innings, the eighth inning was played under the California Tiebreaker Rule. Both teams begin the extra inning with one out and the bases loaded.

The Canes scored a run in the top of the eighth to take a 4-3 lead, but the door was left wide open for the Bombers to deliver the decisive blow.

Mikey Rodriguez stepped in and drew a walk to force home the tying run and perhaps, relieve some of the pressure of the moment from the shoulders of Asencio, the Bombers' catcher. Asencio calmly strutted to the plate and blasted a shot over the right fielder's head as the winning run trotted home from third base.

"That was a tough final," said Semler. "The kid they threw was strong. He was throwing hard. Our core group has been together since they were 8 or 9 years old," said Semler. "They play very well together."

The Bronx Bombers (4-0) pitching staff was stubbornly efficient throughout the tournament. James Garcia, who closed out the championship victory, also split the team's pressure-packed 4-2 opening game victory over the PA Shockers with Augusto Del Carmen.

Jeremy Ramirez pitched three perfect innings as the Bombers defeated the North Edison Blue Devils, 15-0, in the second game of pool play. Ramirez, yet another in a deep Bombers staff stacked with sturdy righthanders, threw just 30 pitches in the shortened game, 26 of which were strikes. Ramirez only struck out one batter but proved that filling the zone with strikes and pitching to contact can be quite effective.

Dariel Osoria, who Semler called the biggest clutch player in the tournament, picked up the victory on the mound when the Bombers defeated Warstic Citius Navy, 9-3, in the final game of pool play, to set up the team's championship round berth.

The 33 runs the Bombers scored in four games certainly indicates some quality hitting, if not by the Bombers high standards. Osoria, Aneudis Mordan, Aidan Cohall, Johnny Robles, and Sam Martinez all were key contributors at the plate, ensuring their hard working mound staff came away with Ws. The Bombers return to Diamond Nation on May 3 for the William Harley Davidson tournament.



11U Mid Atlantic Show 10, RCBC Nationals 0

Mid Atlantic Show defeated RCBC National, 10-0, in the 11U Easter Extravaganza championship game. Gio Cristinzio of Mid Atlantic Show was named the 11U Easter Extravaganza Most Valuable Player. Mid Atlantic Show (4-0) outscored its tournament opponents 34-12. RCBC Nationals (2-2) were outscored 27-19 in the tournament.



13U NJ Glory-Stars 5, NJ Axemen Blue 3

NJ Glory-Stars squeaked past the NJ Axemen Blue, 5-3, in the 13U Easter Extravaganza championship game. Kyle Rogers of NJ Glory-Stars was named the 13U Easter Extravaganza Most Valuable Player. NJ Glory-Stars (5-0) outscored their opponents 32-10 while the NJ Axemen Blue (4-1) held a 34-23 runs advantage on its opponents.