

MID-SUMMER CLASSIC, GARDEN STATE INV. ON TAP AT 'THE NATION'



Diamond Nation is halfway through its summer tournament schedule and, appropriately, the 82-team Mid-Summer Classic grabs the attention of fans this weekend at the Flemington facility.

Once the weekend's action is complete, the 17/18U Garden State Invitational Wood Bat - Powered by Victus will take hold of the state's best tournament complex Monday-through-Friday.

The Mid-Summer Classic will feature four age group brackets -- 10U, 12U, 13U and 15U -- as play begins on Friday afternoon and continues through Sunday evening.

The 10U Mid-Summer Classic boasts a pair of attractive openers at 8 a.m. on Saturday as the LSW Astros meet the East Brunswick Kodiaks and Faigin's Academy Bombers square off with SSA Nationals. The 10U tournament moves to the playoffs on Sunday with first round games at 12:15 p.m. and 2:15 p.m. The semifinals follow at 4:30 p.m. and the championship game will decide matters at 6:30 p.m. on Field 2.

The Cherry Hill Nationals and the Diamond Jacks 10U help to bolster the rugged 10U field.

The 12U Mid-Summer Classic gets going at 4:30 p.m. on Friday with the Wolfpack 12U taking on NJ Glory-Graphite and the Diamond Jacks Gold 12U facing PS2 Academy Crusaders. The 12U playoffs begin 12:15 p.m. on Sunday when the Nos. 2 vs. 3 seeds play for the right to advance to the championship game opposite the top seed. The 12U championship game will be contested at 2:15 p.m. on Field 2.

Frenzy Baseball, CB Raiders, the Diamond Jacks Super 12U and the Collegeville Tigers help to round out a formidable 12U bracket.

The 13U Mid-Summer Classic gets underway with an attractive opener at 6:30 p.m. on Friday that will see the NJ Jays challenging the Jersey Seminoles. The 13U tournament playoffs begin with first round games at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday. The semifinals are set for 6:30 p.m. and the championship game caps the tournament at 8:30 p.m. on Field 3.

Sharks Baseball Academy, New Jersey Bulls, RCBC Nationals and the Muggeo Cardinals are also part of a deep 20-team 13U bracket.

The 15U Mid-Summer Classic features a 44-team field that will be broken down into three playoff brackets, Blue, Red and Green. The tournament opens with a pair of attractive matchups at 12:15 p.m. on Friday. The Ewing/Hopewell Blue Dawgs face Elite Fleet 15U and the NJ Jays take on Wladyka American. The three 15U playoff brackets get started with first round games at 2:15 p.m., 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. on Sunday. The Blue Bracket final is set for 6:30 p.m. The Green Bracket and Blue Bracket championship games will begin at 8:30 p.m.

Jersey Boyz Baseball, Taconic Rangers, Syracuse Baseball Club, Teel Ravens, Full Count Prospects and Evoshield Canes North Atlantic fortify the large 15U tournament field.

The 17/18U Garden State Invitational Wood Bat kicks off the week of July 22 with a trio of openers at 10 a.m. on Monday. Fans may want to walk over to Field 4 where the Sussex County Express tries to chase down 9ers Baseball Club in one opener. The Garden State Invitational playoff is a 10-team affair that opens with first round games at 12:15 p.m. on Thursday. Second round games begin at 2:15 p.m. before the semifinals follow the next day, 2:15 p.m. on Friday, to determine the final round pairing. The championship game will be played at 4:30 p.m. on Friday on Field 1.

The Frozen Ropes Rockies, Complete Performance Baseball Academy, Connecticut Wolfpack, the Diamond Jacks Super 17, All-Out Baseball, NY Grays and the Staten Island Orioles Showcase Gray are some more of the highly touted programs in the Garden State Invitational.



CHIMNEY ROCK A NATURAL LANDING SPOT FOR DIAMOND NATION FAMILIES

By Bob Behre

We can't confirm if President Abraham Lincoln paid a visit to Chimney Rock Inn in 1863, but he could have. We're just suggesting the possibility here that the Prez could have rode into Central Jersey for a bite.

Hey, Chimney Rock Inn was the new thing in town and if the locals back then reacted the way the locals in the greater Flemington area reacted to the restaurant's opening in September of 2018, the joint had to be jammed for lunch and dinner.

"Our history dates back to 1863 in Bound Brook, N.J.," says Chimney Rock Inn owner Alan Frank.

Sure, Chimney Rock Inn had been around 155 years at that point, but the convenient new location in Hunterdon County presented a novel feeling about one of Central Jersey's longest running success stories. The doors opened and families poured in.

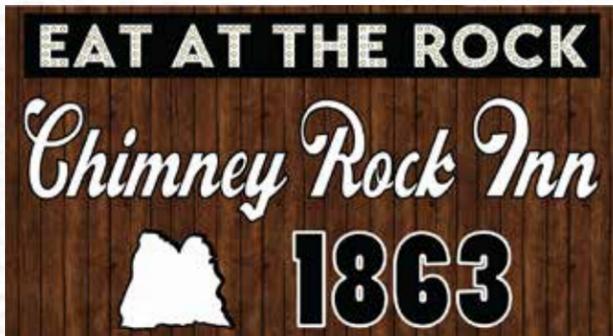
"We believe our homemade meals set us apart from others in the industry," says Frank. "Chimney Rock is built on the authenticity of its food, atmosphere and employees."

To say Chimney Rock has experience and knows its way around a restaurant kitchen may be an understatement, but serving customer needs is more than just delivering a nice meal to their table. "We take pride in exceeding our customer's expectations," says Frank. "It's always great for us to see people discovering their new favorite food."

Chimney Rock Inn's Flemington location and Diamond Nation's clientele have developed an excellent relationship over the short 11 months the restaurant has been open.

"We enjoy meeting teams and families from different areas," says Frank. "We are happy to be host to people from far away towns, and traveling with their team, to experience the taste of our local authentic cuisine."

(continued on back page)



CHIMNEY ROCK (continued from front page)

Chimney Rock Inn offers high quality food with generous portions, at an affordable price. "We also provide party packages and private event spaces to accommodate large groups up to 100-plus people," says Frank.

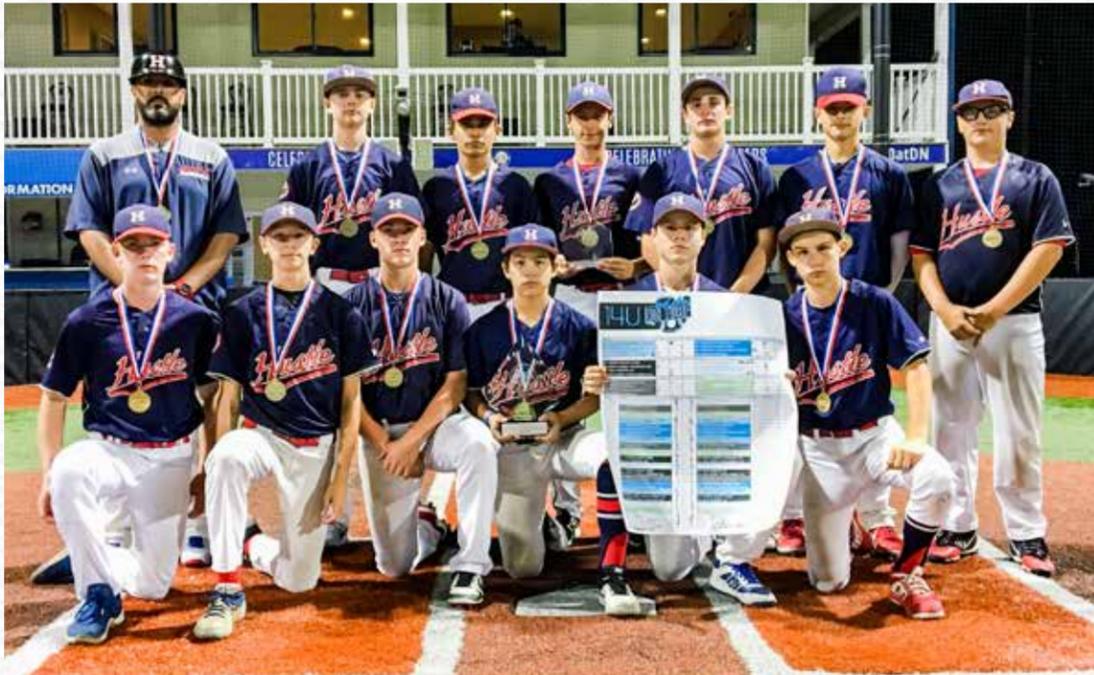
Chimney Rock is expanding across the state of New Jersey and, not surprisingly, the Flemington location is being used as an example to future locations. "Flemington is our ground-up prototype from which future locations will be built after," says Frank.

The restaurant is named after the physical Chimney Rock landmark, a white-painted rock outcropping located on the hills of the Watchung Mountains, overlooking the Middlebrook River. There is a direct trail that leads from the Chimney Rock Inn in Bound Brook to the actual Chimney Rock.

"Chimney Rock Inn has fed more than 8 million people and counting," says Frank.



HUSTLE BASEBALL PROVES TO BE BEST SHOW ON 14U TURF



By Bob Behre

Ian Kiser and Matt Seelagy combined on a three-hitter and Jude Clough went 3-for-4 as Hustle Baseball defeated the Bridgewater Panthers, 3-1, in the 14U Best Show on Turf championship game last night at Diamond Nation in Flemington.

Luke Maida broke a 1-1 tie with an RBI fielder's choice grounder in the top of the fifth that scored Evan Saullys with the go-ahead run. Saullys had sliced a one-out triple down the right field line. Hustle Baseball tacked on an important insurance run in the seventh when Clough singled home Seelagy from third with two outs.

Seelagy had led off the seventh with a single to right field. Saullys bunted him to second base and Maida's grounder got Seelagy to third with two outs. Clough then singled to left field to score Seelagy and boost the lead to 3-1.

That would prove comforting when Cole Cabatu drew a two-out walk in the bottom of the seventh that enabled Bridgewater to bring the tying run to the plate. But Seelagy got the next batter looking at a fastball on the outside corner to end the threat and the game.

Seelagy closed out Kiser's win with three hitless innings, striking out two and walking one. The walk to Cabatu, in fact, was the only baserunner Seelagy permitted.

The lefty Kiser rebounded from a rocky first inning and allowed just one run, which was unearned, on three hits, struck out four and walked four. Three of those four walks by Kiser came in that dicey first inning.

"Ian is a great pitcher," said Hustle Baseball coach Esteban Rodriguez. "I was glad to see him come through in such a big game for us. He's also come through for us with the bat." Kiser, who bats third in the Hustle Baseball lineup, drew a pair of walks in three trips to the plate.

Once Kiser overcame his first inning troubles, he was tough to overcome.

"I was overthrowing a bit and everything was high," said Kiser, named one of the four co-Most Valuable Players in the tournament along with Seelagy, Clough and left fielder Jack Duffy. "Once I stopped doing that I was okay."

Eidan Smith led off the first inning for Bridgewater (5-1) and reached via catcher's interference before Danny Smith drew a walk. Eidan Smith, however, was picked off at second base by Hustle Baseball catcher Clough when Noah Matheson missed on a bunt attempt. Kiser then walked Matheson and Casey Colbert singled to right field to load the bases.

Kiser uncorked a wild pitch to allow Danny Smith to score and give Bridgewater an early 1-0 lead. Kiser then issued his third walk of the inning with two outs to reload the bases. But he induced a fly out to center to end the threat. Kiser would allow one base runner in each of the next three innings but had quickly gained control of matters. "My fastball was working well and, actually, so was my curveball," said Kiser.

Kiser was on a strict pitch count having pitched three innings in his team's 8-3 victory over Power 5 in the first round of the playoffs. Seelagy also pitched effectively in relief in Hustle Baseball's tournament opening victory over Full Count Futures.

Hustle Baseball (5-0-1) evened the score in the top of the second in a rally triggered by Evan Ravalli's leadoff single to center field. Ravalli moved to second on a passed ball, advanced to third on James Macko's sac bunt and scored on a wild pitch. Both pitchers settled in from that point and the game remained knotted at 1-1 until Saullys got things going in the fifth with his triple.

Matheson worked in and out of trouble through the first five innings for Bridgewater.

He permitted one run, which was unearned, on five hits over five innings while striking out none and walking six. The six walks would keep Matheson busy fending off Hustle Baseball but the righthander would strand nine runners in his five innings of work.

Hustle Baseball scored 50 runs through its first five tournament games and, impressively, did not strike out a single time in the championship game.

"Hitting has been a key for us," said Rodriguez.

But it was Bridgewater which amassed the most runs in the tournament, scoring 59, including 22 its first two playoff games. That big production included a wild 12-11 victory over the North Jersey Cardinals in the semifinals in which the teams played two extra innings under the International Tiebreaker.

NOTES: Ty Fredo, Hustle Baseball's No. 2 hitter and shortstop drew a pair of walks and made a nice play fielding a ball behind second base to rob Bridgewater's Bryce Pantozzi of a hit with a runner on and two outs in the third inning. ... Clough, Hustle Baseball's catcher, had three singles, drove in a run and picked off runner. ... Seelagy drew a walk, singled and scored a run. ... Bridgewater's Casey Colbert went 2-for-3 with two singles and Cole Cabatu drew two walks. ... The Panther's third baseman Matt Moore made two fine plays coming in on slow bouncers and gunning the runners out at first base.

15U Diamond Nation World Series Lumberkings 3, Taconic Rangers 0

The Lumberkings defeated the Taconic Rangers, 3-0, in the 15U Diamond Nation World Series championship game. Brian Young of Lumberkings was named the 15U tournament's Most Valuable Player. Lumberkings (5-0) outscored their tournament opponents 34-6 while the Rangers (5-1-1) held a 37-9 runs advantage on their opponents.

18U Diamond Nation World Series Wood Bat All-Out Baseball 7, Snyder Baseball Bucks 0

All-Out Baseball defeated Snyder Baseball Bucks, 7-0, in the 18U Diamond Nation World Series Wood Bat tournament championship game. All-Out (6-0-1) outscored its opponents 43-12 while Snyder Baseball Bucks (6-1) held a 25-18 runs advantage on its opponents.

Best Show on Turf

10U

Diamond Jacks 10U 7, Manalapan Braves Bucks 6

The Diamond Jacks 10U defeated the Manalapan Braves Bucks, 7-6, in the 10U Best Show on Turf championship game. Reid Bazydlo and Michael Basile of the Diamond Jacks were named co-Most Valuable Players of the 10U tournament. The Diamond Jacks (4-0) outscored their opponents 40-12. The Braves (2-2) held a 48-20 runs advantage on their opponents.

11U

RCBC Nationals 9, Diamond Jacks Super 11U 3

The Richmond County Baseball Club Nationals defeated the Diamond Jacks Super 11U, 9-3, in the 11U Best Show on Turf championship game. RCBC awarded the 11U tournament MVP to its entire team. RCBC (4-0) outscored its opponents 38-10. Super 11U (3-1) held a 4013 runs advantage on its opponents.

12U

Stars Baseball Academy 13, HDMH Titans 8

Stars Baseball Academy defeated HDMH Titans, 13-8, in the 12U Best Show on Turf championship game. Ben Raspanti of Stars Baseball was named the 12U tournament's Most Valuable Player. Stars Baseball (4-0) outscored its opponents 40-10. HDHM Titans (4-1) held a 54-21 runs advantage on its opponents.

13U

Baseball U. Pa 6, Combat/Scanzano 13U 1

Baseball U. Pa defeated Combat/Scanzano, 6-1, in the 12U Best Show on Turf championship game. Jordan Santiago of Baseball U. Pa. was named the 13U tournament's Most Valuable Player. Baseball U. Pa. (5-0) outscored its opponents 35-8. Combat/Scanzano 13U (4-1) held a 38-18 runs advantage on its opponents.

16U

Baseball U. Pa. 3, Diamond Jacks Gold 16U 2

Baseball U. Pa. defeated the Diamond Jacks Gold 16U, 3-2, in the 16U Best Show on Turf championship game. Darren Clarke of Baseball U. Pa. was named the 16U tournament's Most Valuable Player. Baseball U. Pa. (5-0) outscored its opponents 34-6 while the Diamond Jacks (4-1) held a 25-13 runs advantage on its opponents.