

Inside The Nation

Baseball/Softball News at Diamond Nation

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SUMMER FINALE CONVENES WITH FIVE AGE GROUP BRACKETS

By Bob Behre

The Summer Finale tournament indeed marks the soon-to-be end of summer ball at Diamond Nation, but not THE very end as our weekend tournaments continue unabated through the end of October.

The Summer Finale is a two-day, 46-team, five-age-group event that will keep the facility jumping through late Sunday evening. All five age groups -- 11U, 12U, 13U, 14U, 15U -- open play at 8 a.m. on Saturday.

The **11U Summer Finale** gets rolling at 8 a.m. on Saturday with an intriguing matchup pairing Team Steel Gold and the Morris Titans. The 11U tournament steams right into the championship game at 3:15 p.m. on Sunday on Field 6.

The Renegades, Hit Brigade, ASBA Cherry Hill, Richmond County Americans, Florence Gold and Redblacks Baseball 11U round out a strong 11U Summer Finale field.

The NY Prospects Capo tangles with ASBA Cherry Hill in the **12U Summer Finale** opener at 8 a.m. on Saturday. That championship contest is also at 3:15 p.m. on Sunday and will be played on Field 2.

Axemen 12U Select and the Connecticut Titans bolster the 12U field.



The **13U Summer Finale** breaks its initial bread at 8 a.m. on Saturday when the Bridgewater Bombers take on ASBA Downingtown at the Jack Cust Baseball Academy diamond. The 14-team field winds down to the semifinals at 3:15 p.m. on Sunday before the finals follow at 5:30 p.m. on Field 3.

West Chester Academy, SC Bulldogs, Oil City Baseball, Northeast Pride, the Bloomfield Bombers, Long Island Baseball, and Team Select Junior Clippers help form a talented 13U bracket.

The East Coast Lumberjacks open up play in the **14U Summer Finale** when they oppose the Clifton Redhawks at 8 a.m. on Saturday. The 14U championship game will be contested at 1:15 p.m. on Sunday on Field 4.

The 14U field is boosted by such talented teams as Baseball U. of Pa., Beast Crimson, NY Prospects and Real Ballers.

The **15U Summer Finale** opens at 8 a.m. on Saturday with three games. One of those attractive openers features Dream Chasers Select and the Harrisburg Hornets. The 15U playoff semifinals begin at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday before the 15s close out the overall Summer Finale with the 15U championship game at 7:30 p.m. on Field 1.

The deep 14-team 15U bracket boasts such quality programs as the Delmarva Aces, Titans Elite, the Rochester Cougars Elite, Valley Dutchman, Jersey Shore Wave and the Cecil Skip Jacks.

MORRIS TOSSES TWO-HITTER TO GUIDE DBA SANDHOGS IN 16U SUMMER BASH

By Bob Behre

Righthander Sam Morris provided the stifling arm and Daniel Orrigo much of the thunder as the DBA Sandhogs defeated the BBA Expos, 3-0, in the 16U Summer Bash championship game last night at Diamond Nation in Flemington.

Morris pitched a two-hit shutout, striking out seven and walking one in a tidy performance that saw the Expos put two runners on base in just one inning. The rising junior from Spring City, Pa. flashed a mid-80s fastball and a deadly changeup he leaned on liberally.

Orrigo was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player for shooting rockets all around the Diamond Nation diamonds the past three days. The third baseman rocked a pair of triples, drove in a run and scored twice in the championship game alone.

"Daniel started out a little slow in the tournament then he found his swing and really hit the ball hard," said DBA Sandhogs coach Rich DeLuca.

Morris had to be zoned in because BBA Expos' righthander Austin Beard, a rising junior at Toms River South High School, put forth a gritty effort in which he permitted three runs, only one of which was earned, on five hits, struck out none and walked one. The Expos consist of predominantly Toms River boys.

Morris, in fact, didn't surrender a hit until Brandon Valles lined a single to center field with two outs in the fifth inning. Nat Obeng's leadoff single to left in the sixth would be the Expos only other hit.

"My fastball was big for me today," said Morris. "But so was my changeup. I threw a lot of them. I started them with two fastballs and went to the change. I only threw a few curveballs."

Morris' changeup has late break that not only throws off a batter's timing but gets a lot of swings and misses. Obeng was the only batter to reach base against Morris in the first three innings and that was due to an infield error in the third.

The Sandhogs scored the first run of the game in the second inning without the benefit of a hit. Orrigo led off and was hit by a Beard pitch. He stole second and moved to third when Daniel Troche reached on an infield error. Orrigo easily scored when Louis Lombardi hit a slow fielder's choice bouncer over third base.

Orrigo led off again in the fourth but this time let his bat do the bruising, launching a long rainbow over the head of center fielder Valles for an easy triple. Beard nearly



worked out of the pickle but Lombardi delivered Orrigo again with a laser to left field that went for a sac fly and a 2-0 lead.

Rueben Livingston, the Sandhogs' No. 3 hitter, lined a single to left field with two outs in the fifth to give the team's clean-up hitter, Orrigo, another chance to do some damage. Orrigo obliged, this time ripping a shot into right-center field for another triple that chased Livingston home and extended the lead to 3-0.

Morris' only shaky inning was the sixth and that was triggered by Obeng's leadoff single to left. Paul DeLuca drew a one-out walk and Obeng stole third as Morris got the second out of the inning via a nasty breaking ball in the dirt. But, with the Expos a hit away from quickly making things interesting, Morris induced the leadoff hitter to pop out to the catcher Troche in front of the plate.

"You can see Sam take it up a notch when those two runners got on base," said DeLuca. "He shut them down."

As strong and resilient as Morris looked through six innings, he ratcheted up his fastball and gave his changeup a bit more bite in the seventh, striking out the first two batters with the off-speed pitch on just seven pitches before getting a come-backer for a 1-2-3 inning that wrapped up the championship.

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MORRIS (continued from front page)

NOTES: Expos shortstop David Ventura (Toms River North) made two pretty plays fielding grounders in the middle of the diamond before gunning the runner out at first base. ... Left fielder Ryan Baker (Toms River North) did a nice job running down a deep shot by Livingston in the third inning ... The Expos' Mikey Florie (Toms River East) had a busy day, handling five challenging plays at third base. ... The Sandhogs (5-1) outscored their tournament opponents 34-9. The Expos held a 29-14 runs advantage on their opponents.

SUMMER BASH RECAPS



10U
Berks Stars 4, Dodgers Nation 1

Berks Stars defeated Dodger Nation, 4-1, in the 10U Summer Bash championship game. Nate Lord of Berks Stars was named the 10U tournament's Most Valuable Player. Berks Stars (4-1) outscored their tournament opponents 52-29. Dodgers Nation (3-2) held a 47-31 runs advantage on its opponents.



14U
Bronx Bombers 4, NY Prospects 14U 3

The Bronx Bombers defeated NY Prospects 14U, 4-3, in the 14U Summer Bash championship game. Mike Rodriguez of the Bombers was named the 14U tournament's Most Valuable Player. The Bronx Bombers (6-0) outscored their opponents 42-6. NY Prospects 14U (5-1) held a 42-17 runs advantage on their opponents.

COLLEGE ELITE CAMP A RARE TEACHING/LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

By Bob Behre

It's certainly a rare opportunity for a high school baseball player to experience what a high level college practice session looks and feels like.

Each year Diamond Nation invites coaches from some of the top programs nationally and locally and puts on what can only be described as a baseball incubator. It is essentially a high-energy, deeply focused baseball classroom.

"This is a different camp," says Vanderbilt assistant coach Scott Brown. "This is teaching through drills. It's teaching instead of playing. There is no other place or camp where you get this level of instruction. We see it as an opportunity to give back."

The dozen or so college coaches instruct about 120 high school players, offering an experience most players do not get until they walk onto campus as college freshmen. The two-day camp on Aug. 15-16 is an intensely focused, fast-paced instructional environment that includes skill drills, station work and plenty of skull session.

One of the main highlights is the recruiting seminar that caps the first day of camp. The seminar provides the high school players with a unique insight into the college recruiting process from the coach's viewpoint. Players learn exactly the type of player and person college coaches are looking to bring into their programs.

"This is a great time to be a baseball player in the northeast," Binghamton University assistant Ryan Hurba told the campers. "Don't take for granted the opportunity you have in front of you. When I went to Oswego State, the first time I met my coach was the first day of practice. And we didn't have facilities like this when I was coming up."

The College Elite instructors utilized much of the Diamond Nation complex as they broke down positional groups -- catchers, pitchers, infielders and outfielders -- into stations, which gave the coaches an opportunity for plenty of one-on-one or, at least, small group instruction.

"We had six or seven hours-plus of instruction on Day 1," said Brown, Vanderbilt's pitching coach. "It's almost like being in classes in college. We give the players index cards and make them write things down that they learn. We want them to take notes. You could see they slept well the night before Day 2. We worked them out. It's a long focus."

Hurba was left impressed with the approach taken by the campers. And at the conclusion of the camp, he let them know it.

"You guys never came off the gas pedal," said Hurba. "You kept it at a high level with the positive energy and hustle."

Brown and University of Maryland pitching coach Corey Muscara steered an impressive camp for the pitchers, which, aside from addressing the specific drills and mechanics, the young hurlers were given typical college pitchers' plans for "the day" and "the year."

"I bring a lot of equipment and gadgets," said Brown. "Just some of the tools we use. We've picked the camp apart the past few years and look for what we can improve upon. There is a lot of preparation that goes into this. I'm going to do this full throttle, just like the rest of the coaches here. We are all very comfortable in a teaching environment."

The College Elite Showcase Camp seems to have grown to a level where the word is out that it is a must-attend event at the end of the summer tournament season. And the coaches have discovered the camp provides them with a multitude of benefits.

"We get time to see how players this age learn and respond to what we are teaching," said Muscara, a Franklin & Pierce grad who came to Maryland after a five-year stint as St. John's pitching coach. "This is also a great opportunity to be around great coaches. Coaching is all about developing by doing. It's an opportunity for us to learn from each other, too."

The catching segment, guided by Coastal Carolina assistant Kevin Schnall, has always been a big hit at the College Elite Camp. Schnall also does an excellent job with the first basemen.

"You must have pride in your effort with the glove," says Schnall, a Mercer County native. "First base gets more balls than any position other than catcher, so the first baseman has to be equally efficient in receiving and throwing the ball. If the ball hits your glove, it has to stay in your glove. And when the ball is released on the throw, it has to be a catchable ball. We are watching for feel, rhythm and tempo."

The second day of camp concludes with a pair of games on adjacent fields coached by the college coaches. Several coaches are on the field and in the dugouts offering plenty of instruction and tweaking as they see fit as the games progress.

"This year's College Elite camp was as strong as ever," said Diamond Nation's recruiting coordinator Steve DiTrolio. "The talent level was extremely impressive, from the 2020 grads all the way down to the 2023 grads."

DiTrolio helps organize and coordinate the camp with Kevin Cust, Diamond Nation's director of baseball operations, and the college coaches.

"The instruction from our talented staff was second to none," said DiTrolio. "The College Elite Showcase Camp has quickly become a must-attend event of the summer."



2019 COLLEGE ELITE SHOWCASE STAFF

- Coastal Carolina, Kevin Schnall
- Vanderbilt University, Scott Brown
- University of Maryland, Corey Muscara
- Binghamton, Ryan Hurba
- Stoney Brook, Jim Martin
- Oswego State, Scott Landers
- St. John's University, George Brown
- Rutgers University, Brendan Monaghan
- Seton Hall University, Pat Pinkman
- Bryant College, Eric Pelletier
- Boston College, Alexander Trezza III
- Northeastern, Nicholas Puccio
- University of Connecticut, Joshua McDonald
- Rowan College at Gloucester County, Rob Valli

