

AUGUST SHOWDOWN, 17/18U SUMMER FINALE KEEP IT HOT IN LATE SUMMER

By Bob Behre

Baseball never truly sleeps at Diamond Nation, despite the month of August being viewed as a time when programs begin winding down for the summer. This busy second weekend in August reveals the very real need for bats, balls and gloves before teams begin the transition from summer to fall.

Diamond Nation will have three age groups taking swings for attention this weekend as the 11U and 13U August Showdown tournaments take hold of the facility as the 17-18U Wood Bat Summer Finale, Powered by Victus keeps the college scouts on their toes once again.

The **13U August Showdown** opens at 6:30 p.m. on Friday when the Jersey Shore Wave attempts to crash in on the Diamond Jacks Gold 13U on Field 4. The 13U August Showdown will boast two playoff brackets, Silver and Gold. Each will have first round games at 2:15 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. on Sunday. The Silver Bracket championship game will be contested at 6:30 p.m. on Field 4 and the Gold Bracket final is set for 8:30 p.m. on Field 3.

The impressive 18-team 13U August Showdown field features such quality programs as Downton 13U, the Diamond Jacks Super 13U, New Jersey Bulls, CB Raiders, Cadets Baseball Academy, East Fishkill Patriots and the Long Island Body Armor Titans.

The **11U August Showdown** begins play at 10 a.m. on Saturday as the LBA Raiders take on the Westside Hawks on Field 2. The 11U August Showdown playoffs get underway with first round games at 10 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. on Sunday. The playoffs move to the semifinals at 2:15 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. before the championship game is contested at 6:30 p.m. on Field 2.

The 11U tournament field includes the Newburgh Knights, Sayville Flashes, NY Bluebirds Blue and Redblacks Baseball 11U.

The **17-18U Summer Finale Wood Bat**, Powered by Victus is a very competitive 28-team event that kicks off with three tournament openers at 4:30 p.m. on Friday. An intriguing opening

matchup pits the Lehigh Valley Revolution and the SNE Wave on Field 3. The Summer Finale playoffs will be broken into separate Gold and Silver Brackets. The Gold semifinals are set for 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. on Sunday while the Silver Nos. 2 vs. 3 seed game is also at 6:30 p.m. Both championship games will be contested at 8:30 p.m. The Gold final is set for Field 1 and the Silver final will be played on Field 4.

Team DeMarini Intensity, Freedom Baseball, Pro Tech, Team Crush Baseball 2020, the Staten Island Orioles Showcase Gray, the South Jersey Young Guns and the ASBA Futures 2021 Gold are a handful of talented teams in this deep field.



FLASHBACK: ANTHONY VOLPE, DIAMOND JACKS SUPER 12U PLAYER OF THE WEEK

Former Diamond Jack Anthony Volpe was drafted by the New York Yankees in the First Round of the MLB Draft this past June. But we at Diamond Nation remember like it was yesterday when 12 year-old Anthony was named the Diamond Nation Player of the Week for his performance on the Diamond Jacks Super 12U team. We thought it would be fun to re-run the Questionnaire Anthony answered back in 2013.

Volpe is playing for the Rookie level Class-A Pulaski Yankees in Pulaski, Virginia. It's amazing to watch him develop and see so much of what he wished for in this questionnaire coming to fruition.

DIAMOND NATION PLAYER OF THE WEEK

Name: Anthony Volpe
Team: Diamond Jacks Super 12U
Age: 12
Bats: Right
Throws: Right
Uniform #: Number 7, because my grandpa's favorite player was Mickey Mantle

I've Been Playing Baseball...: Since I was six months old. Kind of just throwing balls from dad.
My Favorite Position: Any position that will help my team win.

My Second Favorite Position: Shortstop. You are involved in so many plays. You take throws from the outfielders. You have to catch the ball both forehand and glove side.

Favorite baseball memory (as a player): Hitting a two-out walk-off grand slam to beat the Long Island Mudcats 8-7. I was 9 or 10. They were this good team that used to always beat us. They were very cocky. Our boys were going crazy. It felt great.

Favorite baseball memory (as a fan): Watching the Yankees win the World Series in 2009.

Favorite moment from this past week: Getting a 100 on my math test. Most of the time I do well.
What I like most about my team: That we never give up and we always pick each other up when we are down. We're close.

Diving catch to end a game or hit a game-winning HR?: Both feel awesome.

Favorite song on my iPod: "My songs know what you did in the dark (light em up)" by Fall Out Boys. It pumps me up.

If not baseball (other sport you love): Baseball is my life. I do play other sports for recreation.

Pre-game ritual: Catching short-hops, "picks" in front of the dugout. I do it with a teammate, usually with Anthony Brienza our second baseman.

Favorite MLB team: Yankees. My dad liked the Yankees his whole life and I kind of grew up liking them.

Favorite MLB player?: Bryce Harper, because he plays hard and with heart and intensity. My favorite Yankee is Robinson Cano.

Favorite TV show: "Intentional Talk" on MLB Network. They interview players and ask goofy questions. It's funny.

Favorite book: "Unstoppable." It's about a boy who grew up working as a slave. He was adopted. He found out he had cancer and had to get his leg amputated. He worked hard to play again. I read it in our Weekly Reading Journal.

(continued on back page)



Former Diamond Jack Anthony Volpe, right, now playing Single-A ball with the Yankees, receives an MVP award with his Diamond Jacks Super 12U coach Travis Anderson.

VOLPE (continued from front page)

Favorite food: My mom's chicken parmigiana with spaghetti. It always hits the spot.

Favorite class in school: Science. I like my teacher, Mr. Brignola at Valley View school in Watchung.

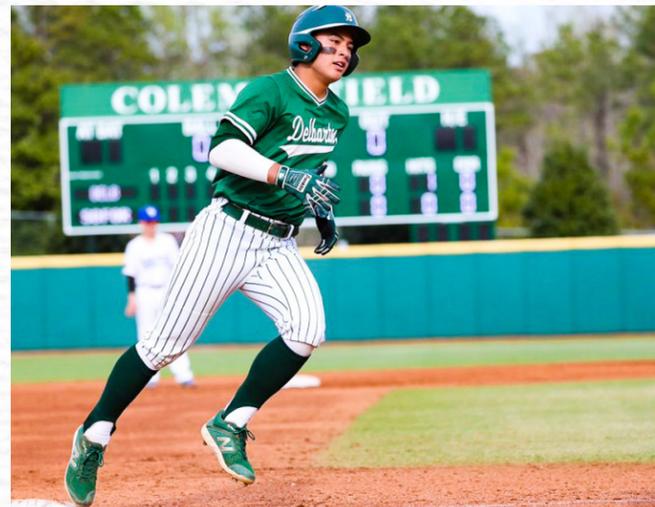
Favorite movie: Bad News Bears, the original. The characters all stuck together like our team and won a lot of games.

When I grow up I want to be...? A major league baseball player for the Yankees.

School/extracurricular activities: I play baseball for my middle school team. I'm the first 6th grader they ever had playing for them.

Three for dinner: Peter Griffin from family guy (one of the characters, he's really funny and goofy). Michael Jordan. I just want to meet him because he's famous. Albert Einstein. I did a book report on him in fourth grade. It said he got kicked out of school. I'd like to ask him questions to see if that was true.

One other interesting thing about me: I was recently invited to tryout for the Team USA 12U Team. The tryouts are June 6th (2013) in Loganville Georgia. I'm very excited and kind of nervous about the competition there. I want to see if I can take the next step forward.



Anthony Volpe playing for his high school team, Delbarton, in 2018.

RIZZO LEADS L.I. JUNIOR DUCKS TO BOYS OF SUMMER 15U TITLE



By Bob Behre

Lefthander Nick Rizzo scattered six hits over 5.2 innings to steer the Long Island Junior Ducks to a 2-1 victory over Elite Squad NY in the Boys of Summer 15U Red Bracket championship game last night at Diamond Nation.

Rizzo stranded five base runners in the first two innings to fend off Elite Squad NY before his command improved and he shut out his opponent the rest of the way. Working a curveball and changeup in nicely with his fastball, Rizzo struck out five, walked two before Jason Campo closed out the victory by getting the final two outs in the sixth inning.

"My changeup and curveball were working well," said Rizzo, just a rising freshman at East Islip High School in Long Island. "I was getting strikes, too, with my four-seam fastball on the inner half."

It was Rizzo who delivered the go-ahead run in the bottom of the fifth. Brandon Buffalini led off with an infield single, easily beating out a slow roller to the left side. Elite Squad NY starter Ayden Alexander then committed a balk that sent Buffalini to second base before a wild pitch moved him to third base with no outs.

Alexander regrouped by striking out the next batter before Rizzo hit a slow bouncer to the left side. Alexander raced over and made a perfect throw to the plate but the ball arrived to catcher George Busnach at the same time as Buffalini. The ensuing collision knocked the ball loose as Buffalini scored to give the Junior Ducks a 2-1 lead.

"It's a game of inches," said Junior Ducks coach Andrew Abreu. "It was well executed by us."

Rizzo was named the Boys of Summer 15U Red Bracket Most Valuable Player.

The execution was actually excellent by both teams in what was a crisp, well-played game loaded with slick plays and gritting pitching efforts with men on base.

Both teams struck for a run in the first inning and Elite Squad's leadoff hitter Brian Cox ripped Rizzo's first offering of the game into right-center field for a double to get things started. Alexander drew a walk and Juan Delacruz singled to center to load the bases with no outs. Chris Villavencio followed with a long fly to center field that Cox had no trouble tagging and score on for a 1-0 lead. Alexander took third on the fly ball, too.

Jayden Luna then hit a bouncer back to Rizzo who ran Alexander back to third base but his throw was too late. Alexander and Luna were both safe and the bases were re-loaded. Busnach then hit a hard shot toward third base that Jake Desburiers leaped and snared for the second out. He then calmly stepped on third for an inning-ending double play.

The Junior Ducks tied it at 1-1 in the bottom of the first courtesy of three walks and Colin Ross' RBI groundout. Desubriers, Mason Mehling and Campo drew walks around a play that prevented much more damage by the Junior Ducks. Nick Grandellis, the No. 2 hitter, hit a laser into right-center but center fielder Jason Rodriguez raced over and made a flat out diving catch for the first out of the inning. Alexander would get a strikeout to strand the bases loaded and extricate himself from further trouble.

Both pitchers settled into a fairly tidy pitchers duel from there.

Rizzo got out of a one-out, two-on jam in the second, struck out the side in the third and benefited from a pretty 5-4-3 double play in the fourth initiated by Desburiers. Rizzo walked Sam Winsett and Rodriguez with one out in the fifth but, again, got out of it. After he allowed a one-out single to Villavencio in the sixth, Abreu came and got him. He inserted the righty Campo who calmly got the final two outs of the game on ground balls.

"Nick settled in," said Abreu. "His fastball has a ton of movement. He battled. He did a good job."

Alexander flashed a nasty curveball to limit the Junior Ducks to just two hits over five innings. He struck out eight and walked five. Alveire Delacruz saved Alexander a run in the third inning when, with Grandellis on second and one out, he charged in on Mehling's sinking liner to right field and made a diving catch for the second out.

"They threw a guy at us who is exceptional," said Abreu.

The Long Island Junior Ducks (4-0) outscored their tournament opponents 17-4. Elite Squad NY (4-1) held a 30-9 runs advantage on its opponents.

BOYS OF SUMMER RECAPS

15U Blue Bracket

Heavy Hitters 9, Beast United 1

Heavy Hitters defeated Beast United, 9-1, in the Boys of Summer 15U Blue Bracket championship game. The MVP was awarded to the entire Heavy Hitters team. Heavy Hitters (5-0) outscored their opponents 49-12. Beast United (3-1-1) held a 25-14 runs advantage on its opponents.



14U Red Bracket

Baseball Warehouse Black 10, Marucci Philadelphia 3

Baseball Warehouse Black defeated Marucci Philadelphia, 10-3, in the Boys of Summer 14U Red Bracket championship game. Coach Big Play Ray of Baseball Warehouse Black was named the 14U Red Bracket Most Valuable Player. Baseball Warehouse Black (5-0) outscored its opponents 41-7. Marucci Philadelphia (3-1) held a 37-14 runs advantage on its opponents.



14U Gold

Grit Orange 11, Morris County Cubs 5

Grit Orange defeated the Morris County Cubs, 11-5, in the Boys of Summer 14U Gold championship game. Chris Ahle of Grit Orange was named the 14U Gold tournament Most Valuable Player. Grit Orange (4-0) outscored its opponents 28-15. The Morris County Cubs were outscored by its opponents 31-29.



12U

Oil City Bandits 11, CB Raiders 3

The Oil City Bandits defeated the CB Raiders, 11-3, in the Boys of Summer 12U championship game. Josh Migdal of the Bandits was named the 12U tournament Most Valuable Player. The Bandits (4-0) outscored their opponents 49-6. CB Raiders (4-1) held a 35-14 runs advantage on its opponent.



11U

Hit Brigade 13, Diamond Jacks Super 11U 12

Hit Brigade defeated the Diamond Jacks Super 11U, 13-12, in the Boys of Summer 11U championship game. Hit Brigade (4-0) outscored its opponents 43-30. The Super 11U (2-1-1) held a 48-32 runs advantage on its opponents.



10U

Hudson Valley Renegades 8, RCBC Nationals 4

The Hudson Valley Renegades defeated the RCBC Nationals, 8-4, in the Boys of Summer 10U championship game. Hudson Valley Renegades (4-0) outscored their opponents 33-15. RCBC Nationals (2-1-1) held a 34-23 runs advantage on their opponents.

