

# BIG WEEKEND FEATURES FALL BRAWL, COLUMBUS DAY SHOWDOWN

By Bob Behre

Daily temperatures have certainly ushered in the fall season this week, so it's appropriate for Diamond Nation to play host to the 33-team Fall Brawl - powered by Victus - when four age brackets will vie for championships.

After the weekend competitions conclude, 'The Nation' will be fired up again on Monday when the 17-18U Wood Bat Columbus Day Showdown takes center stage.

Three off the Fall Brawl age brackets - 10U, 11U and 15U - begin on Friday evening, while the 13U field begins its quest for a championship on Saturday afternoon.

Millburn 9U and South Jersey Elite square off in the **10U Fall Brawl** opener at 6:30 p.m. on Friday on Field 2. The 10U field will cap its three-day tournament with the championship game at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday on Field 2.

The 9U field also boasts such talented programs as Max Impact, NJ Axemen, Underground Vipers, Beast Baseball, Eagle Baseball Club and M Squad.

The NJ Jays meet the Bridgewater Panthers Elite in the **11U Fall Brawl** opener at 6:30 p.m. on Friday on Field 6. The deep 11U field will crown its champion after a 6:30 p.m. final on Sunday on Field 2.

The 11U bracket is also fortified with such sturdy clubs as the PA Shockers, First Move Central, the Diamond Jacks Super 11U, Next Level Athletics, Underground Vipers and the Chichester Storm.



A small **13U Fall Brawl** field begins play at 4:30 p.m. on Saturday with a pair of openers pitting Full Count Baseball against the Diamond Jacks Super 13U on Field 4 and HDMH Titans against the Diamond Jacks Gold 13U on Field 5.

The 13U playoff starts with first round games on Sunday at 4:30 p.m. The 13U playoffs continue with the semifinals at 6:30 p.m. and the championship game at 8:30 p.m. on Field 1.

The Locked In Expos are another veteran and talented program competing in the 13U field.

Rising Stars Baseball faces ASBA Warminster on Field 5 in one of two intriguing openers in the **15U Fall Brawl** bracket. The 15U playoff begins with the No. 2 seed taking on the No. 3 seed in first round action at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday before the winner advances to the championship game

to meet the No. 1 seed at 6:30 p.m. on Field 4.

The 24-team Columbus Day Showdown extends the weekend to Monday and brings together a talented field of 17-18U players who will compete in a Wood Bat tournament. The playoff draw will be broken down to Gold and Silver brackets with a championship awarded in each.

The one-day event opens with three games at 10 a.m. on fields 1,3 and 4. Three more games are scheduled for 12 p.m. before the championship game pairing is decided. The final is set for 2:15 p.m. on Field 1.

The Hit And Run Outlaws, Staten Island Orioles, Complete Performance Baseball Academy 18U, Lehigh Valley Baseball Academy Prospects, Indians Prep, Sportika Gallagher 17U Select, the Diamond Jacks Super 16U, Team Elite and Baseball U. North Jersey 18U American round out an attractive 17-18U field.

# KANE COMMITS TO DELAWARE AFTER SUPER 2019 CAMPAIGN

By Bob Behre

Aidan Kane joined one of New Jersey's top high school teams in mid-season last spring and his impact was felt immediately.

Kane, a 6-3, 185-pound outfielder from Madison, slid into the Delbarton lineup in the No. 5 spot in the batting order and debuted with a 2-for-3, one RBI, one run performance in a 6-1 victory over Parsippany Hills in the Morris County Tournament quarterfinals.

Delbarton (26-3) would go 16-1 after Kane, then a junior, began playing after having to sit out the season's first 30 days under the NJSIAA transfer rule.

"We won our last 15 games and Aidan obviously played all of those," said Delbarton coach Bruce Shatel. "He added value to our lineup."

Kane said, "When I started playing on April 28, coach Shatel put me in the fifth spot in the order. After a week or so of seeing the ball well and hitting well, he moved me up to the third spot."

Kane will be back for another run at an NJSIAA championship next spring after his recent commitment to play baseball for the University of Delaware.

"I committed on Aug. 2, about a week after I had a good camp at Delaware," said Kane.

The lefty-hitting Kane batted .404 for the Green Wave, so his impact was felt on a consistent basis but the outfielder's big moment of the season came in the Non-Public A sectional championship game against Don Bosco Prep. Kane ripped a two-run triple in the bottom of the sixth inning that starter Jack Leiter and reliever Chris Sanzone made stand up in a 2-0 victory.

Delbarton advanced to the Non-Public A championship game where Leiter defeated a talented St. Augustine Prep team, 4-3, as Shawn Rapp delivered the go-ahead single. Rapp also got the last five outs and Anthony Volpe ripped a two-run home run. Leiter is pitching for Vanderbilt, Rapp is playing for North Carolina and Volpe, a first round draft pick, just finished his first season of professional ball with the Yankees. Rapp and Volpe are former Diamond Jacks.

Kane will be one of Delbarton's team leaders in the spring when the Green Wave chases more championship hardware after the graduation of perhaps its finest senior class.



"Aidan gave us a bat in the lineup that would protect Volpe," said Shatel. "He was consistent. He had good at bats each and every day. He was the right guy for us to put in the three-hole down the stretch. He had a couple really big hits and played a large part in us advancing against Don Bosco."

Kane didn't find baseball as much as baseball found him. Aidan's maternal grandfather, David Yates, played baseball at the University of Delaware and is, in fact, in the college's sports hall of fame.

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## KANE (continued from front page)

"My grandpa played at Delaware," said Kane, "They went to the College World Series when he was there and he was drafted. He was the first person I called when I committed. He always wanted me to go there, but he kept it on the down low."

Yates, an infielder, was drafted in the 10th round by Philadelphia in 1970 and played two years in Low-A ball with Walla Walla. He batted a respectable .284, had an on-base percentage of .390 and drove in 31 runs in 69 career minor league games. At Delaware, Yates batted a stunning .444 in 1969 and posted an excellent .377 career mark from 1968-'70, 13th all-time for the Blue Hens. He had a 22-game hitting streak in 1969 and led the team in HR and RBI in 1970. He still works as a sports agent.

"My grandparents just moved to Wilmington, so they'll get to see me play," said Kane. Yates grew up in Delaware.

Kane had a fairly large group of schools to consider throughout the recruiting process before narrowing his choices to Delaware, Dartmouth and Davidson.

"Aidan has really grown into a great baseball player," said Steve DiTrollo, Diamond Nation's director of recruiting. "He came into the program at 10 years-old. Seeing him develop over the last seven years was awesome. He is very dedicated and driven and I'm excited to see what he does his senior year and beyond."

Kane has intangibles working in his favor.

"Aidan's a very focused kid," said Shatel. "He works extremely hard. I think he can really defend at our level and he will at the college level as well. He's a college hitter. He's got the gap-to-gap and he's got power."



Kane has taken the fall off from baseball to work on building his body for the coming season.

"I go to a gym in Chatham four days a week," said Kane, "working two days on my upper body and two days on my lower body and running. It's not necessarily about getting bigger, but rather getting stronger. People love seeing a high weight, but the type of lifting I'm doing is not for mass, it's for functionality and getting stronger. I just want to get stronger and faster."

Shatel agrees: "Aidan's wiry strong. He'd want to add some strength in his lower half. He's a pretty big kid, all of 6-3."

Kane will take with him into his senior high school season and college a wealth of baseball knowledge passed down from his grandfather and imparted by a remarkable group of coaches at Diamond Nation and his high school.

"The coaches at Diamond Nation have done a lot for me, teaching me the game," said Kane. "I've known them since fourth grade. I instantly felt like I was part of a family at Diamond Nation. I've met a lot of kids and made a lot of friends for life. It's crazy that I'm wrapping all those years up now."

Shatel is recognized as one of the top scholastic coaches in New Jersey.

"Coach Shatel is probably one of the best coaches I've played for," said Kane. "He shows he cares a lot. He works hard, scouting other teams, and he really works on motivation."

Kane's stubborn side at the plate will also play well at all levels.

"Aidan very rarely gives up an at bat," said Shatel. "He managed to have quality at bats all season long. As soon as he became eligible for us he became a tough out. He's got leadership qualities for sure."

# WEAVER, MCNULTY GUIDE SPITFIRE TO FALL INVITATIONAL TITLE

By Bob Behre

MacKenzie Weaver tossed a five-hitter and Summer McNulty delivered the decisive run with a single in her team's final at bat as Spitfire edged East Coast Tsunami, 5-4, in the 18U Finch's Aces Fall Invitational championship game on Sunday at Diamond Nation.

Weaver was tough on the East Coast Tsunami batters, offering an unpleasant selection of five pitches as she permitted four runs, only one of which was earned, in the four-inning game. McNulty's single to center field extended the Spitfire lead to 5-2 in the top of the fourth inning.

Weaver, who struck out four and walked two, was named the 14U Finch's Aces Fall Invitational Most Valuable Player.

Spitfire's tack on run proved huge when East Coast Tsunami rallied for two runs in the bottom of the fourth to close within 5-4. Jenna Devens ignited the rally when she reached on an infield error with one out and moved to second on Marli Weller's two-out walk. Both runners scored on Sam Perez's single to center field.

Weller kept charging around third base on Perez's single and scored all the way from first base to shave the Spitfire lead to 5-4. Perez took second on the throw to the plate. Gianni Alberti then drew a walk to put the go-ahead run on base. That was significant as both teams were aware the tournament's game time limit was fast approaching.

Weaver, like she had all game, met the challenge, striking out the next batter on a fastball to end the game.

"My curveball was working real well and so was my outside fastball," said Weaver. "I threw some good screwballs, too. I've been working on the screwball just the last month." Weaver also worked in a changeup and drop to keep the rugged East Coast Tsunami lineup at bay.

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The fourth-seeded Spitfire took the initiative against second-seeded East Coast Tsunami, striking for a run in the top of the first inning. McNulty started things with a leadoff single, stole second and raced to third when the throw to second sailed into center field. After Lexi Rogers was hit by a pitch, Isabella Griswald lofted a fairly deep fly ball to left field and the sac fly scored McNulty easily from third.

Spitfire kept firing in the second, erupting for three more runs to extend its lead to 4-0. Kaylah Thompson started it by reaching on an infield single. She beat out a slow bouncer to the right side. Jade Swartz followed with a hard single through the left side and Spitfire was in business.

Jordan McCarthy then reached on a short pop up behind the pitcher's mound that went for a single and scored Thompson from third. McNulty, in the middle of things again, brought Swartz home with a fielder's choice bouncer to the right side. Weaver capped the rally with a single down the left field line that scored McCarthy from third for a 4-0 lead.

"We got our bats going, the pitching came through and we made some plays defensively," said Spitfire coach Jonathan Weaver. "We came out played the game the way it's supposed to be played."



So did East Coast Tsunami (5-1) for that matter and the squad from Bergen County had an answer for Spitfire's quick start, bringing across a pair of runs of it's own in the bottom of the second. Singles by Kayla O'Brien, Weller and Perez loaded the bases for East Coast Tsunami with one out. O'Brien scored on a passed ball with Gianna Alberti at the plate and Alberti hit a fielder's choice grounder to the right side that scored Weller.

East Coast Tsunami's rally in the second could have been bigger had it not been for a play Weaver made on Jenna Devens leading off the inning. Devens hit a one-hop laser back to the circle that Weaver somehow snared and turned into a 1-3 out at first base. Weaver would strand Perez on third base when she got the final batter on a grounder to first base.

"It's not easy to pull this together in the fall," said Spitfire coach Weaver. "Some girls play other sports so it's tough to get ready to play. These girls won ASA Nationals this summer, so it's a very good team. Our first game this weekend was awful, but we found it. This is a great group and fun to coach."

Spitfire (5-1) dropped its opener to Kaboom Barbero (4-1), 7-2, before rallying to outscored its next five opponents 46-7. East Coast Tsunami held a 39-18 runs advantage on its Finch's Aces Fall Invitational opponents.

NOTES: Both teams made slick plays defensively and always seemed to be in the right place at the right time. Tsunami second baseman Alberti made a nice play chasing down a pop-up behind first base in the fourth inning. ... Spitfire fielders made two nice plays that helped Weaver in a 1-2-3 first inning. Shortstop McNulty backhanded a grounder in the hole and fired to first for the first out of the inning. Rightfielder Avery Eiswerth came charging in to snare a sinking liner for the third out of the first inning.



## FINCH'S ACES FALL INVITATIONAL RECAPS

10U

### Virginia Stars 9, Renegades Fastpitch 7

Virginia Stars defeated Renegades Fastpitch, 9-7, in the 10U Finch's Aces Fall Invitational championship game. Skyler Andrejack of Virginia Stars was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player. Virginia Stars (3-1-1) won despite being outscored by their opponents 41-37. The Renegades (1-4) were outscored by their opponents 34-26.

12U

### Team Long Island 2025 10, OC Bombers 12U 2

Team Long Island 2025 defeated the OC Bombers, 10-2, in the 12U Finch's Aces Fall Invitational championship game. Team Long Island 2025 (7-0) outscored its opponents 66-7. OC Bombers 12U (6-1) held a 65-20 runs advantage on its opponents.

14U

### Delaware Tribe 8, Team Long Island 2024 5

Delaware Tribe defeated Team Long Island, 8-5, in the 14U Finch's Aces Fall Invitational championship game. Camryn Ehlers of Delaware Tribe was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player. Delaware Tribe (6-1) outscored its opponents 47-30. Team Long Island 2024 (5-2) held a 37-34 runs advantage on its opponents.

16U

### Pocono Pride 16U Red 7, Renegades Fastpitch 16U, 5

Pocono Pride 16U Red defeated Renegades Fastpitch 16U, 7-5, in the 16U Finch's Aces Fall Invitational championship game. Pocono Pride (5-0-1) outscored its opponents 52-19. Renegades Fastpitch 16U (5-2) held a 40-28 runs advantage on its opponents.

