

# SIXTY-TEAM FALL HARVEST 2019 BEGINS FINAL LEG OF TOURNAMENT SEASON

By Bob Behre

The final leg of the Diamond Nation Fall Season begins this weekend with the Fall Harvest 2019.

Fall Harvest 2019 is the first of the final three tournaments of the season and 60 teams in three separate age brackets will descend upon Diamond Nation for three days of baseball beginning on Friday.

Sixteen-team brackets have been set in the 12U and 14U age groups and the 16U tournament will boast a highly competitive 28-team field.

The North Jersey Black Bears take on the Diamond Jacks Super 12U squad in one of two 6:30 p.m. openers on Friday in the **12U Fall Harvest 2019**. That opener is scheduled for Field 2. The 16-team field will be pared down to four teams when the semifinals are played at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday. The winners battle for the 12U championship at 6:30 p.m. on Field 2.

Millburn Blue, Gambrells Athletics, Mid-Atlantic Show, All-Out Baseball, ASBA Cherry Hill and Lincroft Lightning Blue 12U help bolster a dynamic 12U field.

The **14U Fall Harvest 2019** has a pair of 6:30 p.m. openers on Friday, too. One of those features a matchup of Langan Baseball Prospects and the Diamond Jacks Gold 14U on Field 4. The 14U playoffs get underway with the semifinals at 6:30 p.m. on Sunday. The 14U championship game is set for 8:30 p.m. on Field 1.



Power 5 Baseball, RBC Nationals, CB Raiders, Diamond Jacks Super 14U, Wladyka Baseball American, Sportika Gallagher Elite 14U and Full Count Futures help form an admirable 14U field.

Lehigh Valley Pates and Diamond Studs Baseball square off in one off three 6:30 p.m. openers on Friday in the **16U Fall Harvest 2019**. There will be two championship brackets in the 16U tournaments; Gold and Silver. The Gold Bracket playoffs open with a 2 vs. 3 game at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday. The Gold Bracket championship game is set for 6:30 p.m. on Field 3. The Silver Bracket playoff begins with the semifinals at 4:30 p.m. and Silver Bracket playoff is capped by the championship game at 6:30 p.m. on Field 4.

The 28-team 16U field is a deep one and features such outstanding programs as the Bell Ringers, Big League Talent Aces, South Jersey Storm, Hit And Run Outlaws 2022, Complete Performance Baseball Academy, Locked In Expos, NJ Giants, 9ers Baseball Club, Avengers Baseball 16U, Wladyka Baseball, Sportika Gallagher 16U Elite.

The final two fall tournaments left on Diamond Nation's calendar are the Halloween Mash (10U, 11U, 12U and 15U) on Oct. 25-27 and November Nation (10U, 11U, 12U, 13U and 14U) on Nov. 1-3.

# RELENTLESS COMPETITOR GLUCK CHOOSES FRANKLIN & MARSHALL

By Bob Behre

Matt Gluck is the type of player teammates love playing with and coaches love coaching. If you are a fan of the game, Gluck is also an awful lot of fun to watch.

"Matt works 100 percent at everything he does," says his West Morris High School coach Tom Reindel. "He doesn't know how to halfway something. He has incredible leadership skills and he gets better as the competition gets better. He loves to compete."

Gluck is a baseball MacGyver of sorts. He has a tool to solve every potential challenge. Need a base runner? Gluck can drop one down, draw a walk or beat out a grounder. Need a runner in scoring position? Gluck can steal a base. Need a runner moved over? Gluck can hit a bouncer to the right side. Need a run? Gluck can shoot a gap.

And if you need someone to drive an opponent nuts, the 5-7 Gluck can do that, too, with pleasure.

"I'm not a big kid but I will take advantage of every opportunity," said Gluck, who committed to Franklin & Marshall on Aug. 3. "I'll put myself out there for my team to win. I will not take a play off or take anything for granted. You only get an opportunity once. I'll do anything I can to win a game."

Gluck has been a Diamond Jack since he was 10 years old and has started for his high school team since his freshman season. It would be difficult to find a bigger baseball junky, a player with more passion for the sport, than Gluck.

"Matt is a terrific player who has put up huge numbers for us through three years," says Reindel. "But his value to the program cannot be measured in stats. He is one of the hardest working young men I have come across."

If you haven't seen Gluck play, imagine the Yankees Brett Gardner as a high school player. He's a relentlessly aggressive ballplayer willing to play wherever his coach needs him and do whatever is required to win.

"I coached him when he was a 12U player with us," said Kevin Cust, Diamond Nation's director of baseball operations. "I remember telling Matt he needed to be that type of player, like Gardner, all the time. It's been fun watching him take that suggestion and run with it. And it was really cool to see him this summer, as a 17 years old, doing those same things."

Gluck made the same instant impression at West Morris as he did in the Diamond Jacks program as a neophyte grinder.

"Matt is a four-year starter at third base and he is one of the best defensive infielders in the state," said Reindel.

Gluck started the past three seasons at third base for West Morris and will move to shortstop next spring, replacing Aidan Healy, a talented player in his own right now playing at Furman. Gluck also played shortstop during West Morris' run to the NJSIAA Group 3 championship game last spring when Healy was pitching.

"He was our team MVP as a freshman and, arguably, the most important player for us the past two years," said Reindel. "Gluck already has 87 career hits and has scored 67 runs the past three seasons."



**Matt Gluck will be starting at third base for West Morris for a fourth straight year next spring before heading to Franklin & Marshall to hone his academic and baseball skills.**

He boasted a .411 on-base percentage in 2019 when he lashed out 26 hits, drew 20 walks and was hit by five pitches. He also drove in 19 runs and stole 12 bases for 26-7 West Morris.

"I play the game because I love it. It's my passion," said Gluck. "I like to prove, too, that even at 5-7 you can go after your dream and achieve it. Just because you're smaller doesn't mean you can't make it to where you want to be."

Gluck's height has never been an issue for him at any level of ball, unless you've made the mistake of underestimating him because of it. He has competed at a high level for the Diamond Jacks, too, playing for the Super 17 squad this past summer under the direction of coach Cust.

"Matt is just a pleasure to coach," says Cust. "He's great to be around, he's always reliable and the type of kid you want in your program. He does and says all the right things."

Gluck attracted the attention of a number of colleges this summer and began to focus in on a few that turned his head.

"I was looking at high academic schools with competitive baseball teams," said Gluck, "like Lafayette, TCNJ, Muhlenberg and some other Centennial Conference school. I wanted to play at a school where their coaches wanted me." Gluck visited Franklin & Marshall at the end of July and began to seriously weigh his college options.

"Franklin & Marshall seemed like a nice fit," he said. "The campus was beautiful. The architecture of the buildings is amazing. They are a competitive Division 3 school with a winning record almost every year. I wanted to continue to be in a competitive and winning atmosphere."

**GLUCK** (continued on next page)

## GLUCK (continued from front page)

Gluck has experienced a lot of winning at West Morris, particularly in 2019 when the Wolfpack reached both the Morris County Tournament championship game and the state final in Group 3. Despite falling to eventual Non-Public A state champ Delbarton, 2-1, in the MCT final and Wall in the Group 3 final, it was a season the West Morris players will embrace forever.

"It was 100 percent an unforgettable season," said Gluck. "I've made friendships for life in a team atmosphere that was something special. No other West Morris team had a season like that. It was really special for me and my teammates."

It was West Morris' first-ever state final berth after the team won its first-ever sectional championship; a tension packed 2-1 victory over Nutley. Next up was an equally pressure-packed 5-4 triumph over conference rival Roxbury in the Group 3 semifinals.

Gluck, who failed to reach base in just four of West Morris' 33 games, transitioned into the summer smoothly with the talented Diamond Jacks Super 17 squad.

"We traveled all over this summer," he said. "It was my last summer with all my Diamond Jack buddies. It was a good atmosphere; a winning culture and we had a great experience in Georgia. Coach Cust is so knowledgeable about the game. He taught us the importance of being loose when competitive. When you play loose everything comes to you. Your natural instincts take over. This summer was everything I could have asked for."

Gluck is playing for the Diamond Jacks this fall, too, while also playing for the West Morris American Legion team. "Baseball is a sport you can't take off," said Gluck. "You need to see live pitching to get better. This is helping me to prepare for college. I expect to start my freshman year. I have an opportunity and I'll work as hard as I can to reach my goal."



Matt Gluck of the Diamond Jacks Super 17 squad takes a rip during the Garden State Underclass Games at Diamond Nation.

All of Gluck's work since that first 10U season with the Diamond Jacks is paying off.

"The Diamond Jacks coaches made me the player I am today," he said. "I wouldn't be where I am today without the skills all those coaches taught me the past eight years. They've taught me how to manage adversity and how to be a good player. All the credit goes to them."

Final Thought: West Morris' success enabled Gluck and his teammates to run into two of New Jersey's very best pitchers last spring. Major League draft pick Jack Leiter, a righthander now at Vanderbilt, pitched one-hitter against West Morris in the Morris County Tournament final. Wall's lefthander Trey Dombroski, who stifled West Morris in the state final, is now pitching for Monmouth University. NJ.com named Dombroski the State Pitcher of the Year.

"Leiter was throwing 98 that day," said Gluck. "That's the adversity the game throws at you and it's the best part of the game. Facing pitchers like those two guys is something I'll never forget. They made me stronger as a player. I'll probably never face a pitcher better than Leiter, so no one else really worries me."

## M-SQUAD OVERCOMES EAGLES BASEBALL IN 10U FALL BRAWL FINAL



By Bob Behre

It's fair to wonder what your going to get from a field full of nine and 10 year olds but M-Squad 10U and Eagles Baseball Club showcased just how impressive baseball neophytes can be at Diamond Nation.

Addison Adornato came into get the final two outs of the games, squelching an Eagles Baseball threat as M Squad held on in a well-played and entertaining 5-4 victory in the 10U Fall Brawl championship game.

M Squad received an outstanding start from lefthander Matthew Filiaci and a 3-for-3 performance from its leadoff hitter Adornato, who would be named the tournament's Most Valuable Player. M Squad carried a 5-1 lead into the bottom of the fifth but Eagles Baseball struck for three runs to draw within 5-4. Then the Pennsylvania team put the pressure on in the sixth.

Reliever Chris Tortorella had to stare down the top of the Eagles Baseball batting order in the sixth and got its leadoff hitter on a grounder to third base. Filiaci, now at first base, made a great pick on Mateo Liloia's throw for the first out. But Jonah Gonzalez followed with a double into right-center field to put the tying run in scoring position.

M Squad coach Jon DiGregorio called on Adornato to close it out but the short stint wouldn't be without some angst. Will Brown drew a walk on a 3-2 pitch to put the potential winning run on base. Adornato then induced a fly out to right field for the second out as both runners moved up a base. Eagles Baseball was suddenly a single away from a thrilling victory.

But Adornato got the next batter to hit a bouncer to second base that Tyce Hanratty gobbled up and threw to first to end the game.

"Addison was our spark plug the whole tournament," said DiGregorio. "He started our engine."

The righthander Filiaci was terrific over four innings. He limited Eagles Baseball to one run on two hits, struck out 10 and walked just one. "Matt is lights out all the time," said DiGregorio. "We rely on him. He never flinches. He's calm out there." Filiaci peppered the zone with strikes, catching five of his 10 strikeout victims looking. He struck out the side in the second, all looking at fastballs dotting the outside corner.

Filiaci turned the game over to the M Squad bullpen with a 2-1 lead in the fifth. That lead came courtesy of a rally in the top of the third ignited by the bottom of the M Squad order and an Adornato timely hit. Michael Donahue, the No. 9 hitter, led off with a single through the left side. He took second on a passed ball and moved to third on a nice sacrifice bunt by No. 10 hitter C.J. Cantagallo. Adornato followed with an RBI single through the middle for a 1-0 lead. Adornato then stole second, reached third on Tortorella's fielder's choice grounder and scored on a wild pitch.

Filiaci surrendered a two-out triple to Khalil Roberts in the second inning but spotted a fastball on the outside corner to strike out the next batter and end the sudden threat. Filiaci couldn't

keep Eagles Baseball off the scoreboard in the fourth, though, when Garret Mainhart tripled with one out and just kept coming around third and scored as the relay went to the wrong base.

M Squad re-asserted itself in the fifth when it struck for three runs, all unearned, but on some clutch hitting with two outs. Hanratty started it with a leadoff walk but by the time the lineup flipped to leadoff man Adornato, two were out. Adornato kept the line moving though with a single to center field as Hanratty took second. Tortorella then hit a bouncer to third base but was safe as the throw got away. Hanratty raced home to extend the lead to 3-1.

Filiaci then delivered the biggest hit of the game, a shot to right field that went to the fence for a two-run triple and a 5-1 lead.

M Squad is made up of ballplayers from Mountainside and Westfield in Union County. "They blend well together," said DiGregorio. "They are real ball players who play really heads up ball."

M Squad (4-0) outscored its tournament opponents 30-13. Eagles Baseball Club (3-1) held a 39-12 runs advantage on its opponents.



### FALL BRAWL RECAPS

11U

**Diamond Jacks Super 11U 2, Bridgewater Panthers Elite 0**

The Diamond Jacks Super 11U edged Bridgewater Panthers Elite, 2-0, in the 11U Fall Brawl championship game. Tommy Denvir of the Super 11U was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player. The Diamond Jacks (3-1) outscored their opponents 41-19. The Panthers Elite (3-1) held a 38-10 runs advantage on its opponents.



13U

**HDMH Titans 10, Diamond Jacks Super 13U 4**

The HDMH Titans defeated the Diamond Jacks Super 13U, 10-4, in the 13U Fall Brawl championship game. Tyler Cook of the Titans was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player. The Titans (4-0) outscored their opponents 39-8. The Super 13U (3-1) held a 39-10 runs advantage on its opponents.



15U

**Wall Wildcats 7, Rising Stars Baseball 5**

The Wall Wildcats defeated Rising Stars Baseball, 7-5, in the 15U Fall Brawl championship game. Shane Andrus of the Wildcats was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player. The Wall Wildcats (5-0) outscored their tournament opponents 42-16. Rising Stars Baseball (3-1) held a 31-10 runs advantage on its opponents.



17/18U Gold

**Locked In Baseball Expos 2, Team Elite 0**

The Locked In Baseball Expos defeated Team Elite, 2-0, in the 17/18U Fall Brawl Gold Bracket championship game. Tom Clancy of Locked In was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player. Locked In Baseball (4-1) outscored its opponents 20-12. Team Elite (3-1) held a 16-5 runs advantage on its opponents.



17/18U Silver

**Staten Island Orioles Showcase Gray 1, Massapequa Baseball 2020 0**

The Staten Island Orioles Showcase Gray nipped Massapequa Baseball 2020, 1-0, in the 17/18U Fall Brawl Silver Bracket championship game. Matthew Bedford of the Orioles was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player. Staten Island (3-1) outscored its opponents 11-4. Massapequa Baseball (2-2) held a 17-14 runs advantage on its opponents.