

SMITH SCORES 2, ADDS RBI DOUBLE; NORRIS SCORES TWICE; HINKEL RAPS 2 SINGLES, RBI

Montville 11s Top Westfield in N. Providence League, 9-6

By **DAVID B. CORBIN**

Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

Montville pitchers Nikolas Santos, Michael DeDonato and Greg Nieskens bent a little but came through with key strikeouts at the right time to hold back the Westfield 11-year-old baseball team, 9-6, in New Providence Green League action at Gumbert 3 Field in Westfield on July 21.

Santos started the game and allowed three runs on two hits and three walks, while recording three strikeouts in two innings. DeDonato pitched the next three innings and yielded just one run on one hit, while walking three and striking out three. Nieskens relieved in the sixth, yielded two runs on two hits, while walking one, hitting a batter and striking out two.

"Our pitchers have been good all year. Nicky Santos started the game for us and did a great job. Michael came in and threw the ball really well. Really at this age, you just want them to throw strikes. They pitched strikes. We made some plays, and things worked out well," Montville Head Coach Chuck Leitgeb said.

Westfield used four pitchers, and Westfield Head Coach Jeff Gerris' primary aim for them was control. Noah Levy pitched the first inning. Tommy Norris pitched the next two innings. Sandy Miller pitched the fourth and fifth innings, and Jeffrey Bennett pitched the sixth inning, retiring all three batters whom he faced.

"We had Levy, Miller, Norris and we closed with Bennett, who held them. You find one kid who is pitching strikes, pitching solid, he's the kid you want," Coach Gerris said.

The Mustangs received several solid defensive plays throughout the game, especially from third baseman Blake Hunsinger, short-stop Ben Torres and second baseman Aaron Warsaw.

"I always tell the kids pitching and defense wins games. You can hit the ball, but if you can't pitch and play defense, you are not going to win games. I think that's what happened today. We pitched well. We made some plays in the field, and we were able to win," Coach Leitgeb said.

The Little Blue Devils struggled

finding the open spots for hits and had only three singles until the sixth inning when they added respective RBI doubles from Emmitt Smith (2 runs scored, walk, stolen base) and Jack Gerris, who also had a walk. Lead-off batter Brian Hinkel finished with two singles, an RBI and a stolen base. Ethan Wolf singled and scored once. Norris walked three times and scored twice, and Levy walked twice and scored once. Sean O'Brien and Miller each had three plate appearances.

"The game was slow at the start, but we rallied back in the end, coming back in the sixth inning," Coach Gerris said.

The Mustangs totaled nine hits, and Colin Leitgeb led with an RBI single and a double, while scoring twice. Cyrus Dastparardeh singled and scored twice. Tyler Sia doubled and scored once. Nieskens rapped an RBI single, walked and scored once. Warsaw and Santos each poked an RBI single, received a free pass and scored once. DeDonato singled and scored once. Jory

Heller had three plate appearances. Hunsinger and Torres both walked once.

The Mustangs made good use of two singles, two walks and an error to plate four runs in the top of the first inning then stretched their lead to 5-0 when Santos looped an RBI single over short in the second inning that ended when Wolf made a fine snag of a liner at second base.

Westfield closed the gap to 5-3 in the bottom of the second when Levy, Norris and Smith all walked and scored. Hinkel had an RBI single in the inning. The Mustangs unloaded in the third inning with doubles from Leitgeb and Sia and an RBI single from Warsaw. All three managed to stomp their hoofs on the plate to make the score, 8-3.

Wolf singled in the bottom of the third and later scored on a wild pitch, but Montville upped the score to 9-4 when Nieskens lined an RBI single to center. Westfield's final two runs began with a leadoff walk to Norris in the bottom of the sixth. Smith smacked his RBI double to left and Gerris drilled his RBI double to center.

Both teams had been using this game as a tune up for the playoffs, which began early this week.

"Westfield played a great game, so it was good that we had good game like this," Coach Leitgeb said.

"The playoffs are coming up Monday. We will know a little more of our status, whether we have home field advantage or not, and we will go from there," Coach Gerris said.

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David B. Corbin for *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times*

SAFE AT HOME...Montville Mustang Greg Nieskens, No. 7, slides home safely in the first inning as Westfield pitcher Noah Levy applies the tag at Gumbert 3 Field in Westfield on July 21.

Probitas Verus Honos

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