

July 22 Babe Ruth SNJ 14s

Pitching rich Hamilton breezes past Manasquan

By Rich Fisher

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July 22: They had to wait for what seemed an eternity.

But when the wait was over, it only took a few innings to get back in a groove.

The Hamilton Babe Ruth 14-year-old All-Stars had little trouble in their SNJ State Tournament opener in West Windsor tonight, taking a 9-0 victory over Manasquan as four pitchers combined on a one-hitter.

Hamilton was coming off an emotional District One Tournament championship in which it had to win six straight games, including two in one night against arch-rival Nottingham to clinch it.

But the momentum got washed away in a wave of humidity during an off-week and Hamilton had to start all over.

“They wanted to get right back into playing after districts,” manager Mike “Mo” Mocerri Sr. said during a late-night, cell phone press conference on the side of the road. “I knew we’d be . . .not flat. . .but that it would take a few innings for us to hit the ball.

“The first inning we hit a few good balls but they were right at people. So we got off to a little slow start and then the bats came to life and our pitchers threw really good.”

Did they ever. Cody Astbury got the start and threw four innings of one-hit ball with two strikeouts. Justin Marcik, Cole McManimon and Dan Mostrangeli each followed with an inning of scoreless relief, and the four allowed just one walk.

“We must have played 12 games in preseason, and our pitchers might have walked six guys,” Mocerri said. “They’re really doing good with the walks.

“It’s really been amazing the way they’ve pitched. They don’t strike out a lot of guys. But I told them if you don’t walk guys and play good defense, that will keep you in every ball game.”

Offensively, Cole McManimon got things started with an RBI ground-out in the second inning. Hamilton took control in the fourth when Astbury walked, Nick Payesko singled and McManimon belted a two-run double. Ross Talbot singled, Anthony Medina hit an RBI single, Tino Malave delivered a sacrifice fly and Medina scored on a passed ball.

Hamilton added one in the fifth and two in the sixth, as Payesko had three hits and Nick Leona added two hits and two RBIs.

The Switlik Gang now awaits the winner of Saturday’s Brick-Mount Laurel game, who it will play at 5:30 p.m. Sunday.

Big Mo earned himself one more game on the bench, although he was on thin ice after Little Mo guided Hamilton to its two wins over Nottingham.

“If we lost tonight, the uniform would have been washed,” Big Mo laughed. “I might have had to put it away and go sit in the outfield.”