

Del Norte All-Stars enjoy their time at Western Regional Tournament

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Winning a Western Regional Tournament championship was always going to be a difficult task for the Del Norte Little League Senior All-Stars, but it was a challenge the team embraced this past weekend.

The Del Norte players qualified for the big tournament after winning the Oregon state championship earlier this summer and they made the trip to Oakland eager to represent their area well and advance to the Little League Senior World Series in South Carolina.

Competing in a 10-team field that included state champions from throughout the Western United States, the Del Norte All-Stars bowed out of the double-elimination tournament with their second loss on Sunday.

In a battle of the Great Northwest state winners, Del Norte fell 21-0 to the Washington champions, closing out tournament play 1-2.

They opened up with a tough 31-1 loss to the Southern California champions on Friday July 22nd, before claiming a forfeit victory over the Wyoming champions on Saturday July 23rd.

And all in all, despite the losses, it was a memorable weekend for the Del Norte boys.

“They had a blast,” coach Jon Nelson said. “It was a really good experience for the kids. I want to say that was the first time Del Norte ever went to Regionals.”

The Del Norte players scored their only run of the weekend on a well-executed Greyson Franklin bunt in the opening game.

Unfortunately, while the pitchers didn't give up a lot of hits over the weekend, defensive miscues cost the team, especially in Sunday's loss.

"We had a lot of errors," Nelson admitted.

Saxon Taylor impressed both at the plate and on the mound, hitting a double on Friday and adding one of his team's three hits on Sunday.

"Saxon's a great player for us," Nelson said. "He plays a lot of travel ball and he's a really good athlete."

The coach also praised Franklin for making some key defensive plays at third base, while adding that Taylor and Syllas Sampels were their "go-to pitchers."

Sampels also had a base hit in Sunday's loss, along with Jake Shrewsberry.

Overall, the coach was impressed with the tournament, which he described as "pretty tough competition."

"It was run really well," he said. "The other teams were great and there was great sportsmanship."

Nelson was also impressed with what he saw from his players the entire postseason, which included winning a three-game championship series to clinch the Oregon state title.

"It was amazing," he said. "It was a great group of kids and they really stuck it out. Even when we were down, they tried their best till the very end. That was great to see. I'm really proud of them."