

West Regional rough on Warriors in opener

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Del Norte Little league's first ever appearance in the West Regional on Thursday was rough on the Warriors. After a decent start to the game, Del Norte manager Warren Loftin said the team kind of lost its cool while playing in near 90 degree heat in Sacramento, and ended up falling 21-0 in four innings against Arizona in the first round of the double elimination tournament.

Arizona jumped ahead 4-0 in the bottom of the first inning, but exploded for a nine-run second inning during which Loftin said Del Norte seemed to lose their positive outlook.

"In the first inning we were fine. We got a kid on base before they got us out. In the second inning we made a couple errors and it went to 6-0 and the kids kind of gave up and let it get away from them," Loftin said. "It was tough. It is pretty warm and they are not used to that. We just kind of made a couple errors and couldn't come back from it. They kind of quit before the second inning was over and it just kept going from there. But we play tomorrow against another team that will be taking a loss today too."

Del Norte had a lot of obstacles to overcome in the first round with a relatively young team for their age group, no previous experience playing together competitively as a team, and just a 10-man roster. Loftin said

the heat was also something the team had to get used to at nearly 90 degrees in Sacramento. Meanwhile Arizona is on a nine-game winning streak after their state tournament while the 90 degree temperatures were almost cool for the boys from the desert.

“They had a few 6-foot tall kids and one was probably 280 (pounds). They had a 16-man roster with a lot of rotation and a lot of speed. They played together and they made good plays. We had a couple good hits, but they played the ball well and got us out,” Loftin said. “They have played a lot together and they are on a 9-0 run through their last tournaments. So they have had a lot of play together that we are lacking. I think one of the biggest difficulties for us is that we haven’t faced anybody in a tournament setting, whereas (Arizona) has faced quite a few teams and have been able to come back from deficits and keep themselves in the game.”

Although the first game was a difficult one for Del Norte, the Warriors were back in action on Friday for a second round matchup against Wyoming. That game was completed after the Triplicate went to press on Friday.

“Hopefully they forget about (Thursday) and prepare themselves for what they are facing,” Loftin said after the loss to Arizona. “We knew we were going to be facing some really tough competition, but it is hard to know before you see. Realistically it wasn’t even that they were that much better. We just didn’t make our plays. We just have to shake off today and be ready for tomorrow because it’s a whole new day. We got our first game out of our way. We just have to focus on keeping our mental positivity.”

Loftin said Friday’s game against Wyoming, which fell to Hawaii on Thursday, should be a more even match up. Both teams were named their respective state champions without any challengers — so it will be just the second official game for both teams this postseason.