

Warriors one win from title round

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Del Norte's Junior Baseball All Stars have had the best showing of any of the four local teams competing at their respective Oregon Little League State Tournaments this summer. The Warriors got off to a fast start with a 14-3 victory over host Bend North on Saturday, followed by an 8-6 win over LeGrand on Sunday.

Although Del Norte suffered their first loss on Monday against Murray Hill, 22-3, it was still alive in the double elimination bracket as it headed into the semifinal round for a rematch with LeGrande Tuesday after the Triplicate went to press.

"We hit really well in the first game, played good defense and our pitching was on," said Del Norte head coach Levi Thomas. "In the second game it was pretty much the same thing. We played really well in both of those games. (On Monday) the kids came in and it was just one of those baseball days when the baseball cards were against us."

Del Norte dominated over the weekend, making quick work of North Bend as they jumped out to an 11-run lead to wrap up the game in five innings. In the second round the Warriors once again got off to a fast start

and held an 8-0 advantage heading into the last inning. LeGrande was able to put together a big comeback, scoring six runs in their final at bat, but the Warriors managed to hold on for a two-run victory.

As it turned out, Del Norte received a particularly difficult draw in the five-team tournament with all three teams that they have faced making up the top three teams other than the Warriors in the tournament field. Murray Hill has already punched its ticket to the championship game, and North Bend and LeGrande faced off on Monday in the consolation quarterfinals for a chance at a rematch with the Warriors.

“Needless to say, they didn’t do us any favors with the bracket coming in here,” Thomas said.

In addition to tough competition, Del Norte also ran into the most grueling schedule of any of the teams competing.

“We were the only team, I believe, that hasn’t had a day off yet,” Thomas said. “Somehow the bracket got stacked against us pitching-wise where everybody had their pitchers ope and we were pretty much run into the ground.”

Del Norte managed to pick up win in each of their first two games at state, but all of their top pitchers were unavailable by the time they faced Murray Hill on Monday.

“We were short on pitching,” Thomas said. “Our pitchers didn’t do bad, but they just teed off on us. We had a lot of walks, but they were just a good hitting team. They were really good.”

The Del Norte Junior All Stars didn’t have any challengers in the District 8 Tournament, so their first live competition has been at state. Now that Thomas has seen his team in action, he said he has liked what he has seen.

“They are fighters,” Thomas said. “They are going to battle, so we aren’t out of it yet. We are going to fight to win and keep going because those kids aren’t going to give up. We will bounce back (Tuesday evening) and play our Del Norte baseball.”

Through the first three games, Thomas said Del Norte has been led offensively by Isaiah Parsley, Ethan Thomas, Willie Bommelyn, and Brody Mattz.

“Those are pretty much our standout hitters right now,” Thomas said. “We have been stringing hits together with a lot of the other players too, but those have been our most consistent batters.”

If Del Norte managed to pick up a win on Tuesday, they will be back in action today for a rematch with Murray Hill with the Oregon State Championship on the line. Since Murray Hill is still undefeated in tournament play Del Norte would have to pick up two straight wins in a championship doubleheader today. The first game is scheduled for 2 p.m., with the second game set to start at 5 p.m., if needed.