

Blaze finish strong

Staff reports

The Norwalk Blaze 16-and-under fastpitch softball team won the New Jersey Heatwave tournament, sweeping three games in the rain-shortened event in Howell, N.J.

The Blaze defeated the Westchester Warriors 6-0 in the first game of the tournament. The Blaze broke open a scoreless pitchers duel in the fifth when Amanda Millilo led off with a single, stole second, moved to third on a sacrifice by Katie Schmidt and scored on an RBI single by Jessica Schmidt.

After escaping a bases loaded jam in the top of the sixth, the Blaze broke the game open by scoring five runs in the sixth. Nikki Talericio led off with a single and Eileen Ornousky followed with another hit. Samantha Saccamano cleared the bases with a long home run to left center. Meg Billmeyer,



Members of the Norwalk Blaze U-16 softball team, which won the New Jersey Heatwave tournament. From left to right, back row: coach Kate Deforge, Jen Frusciante, Meg Billmeyer, JJ Schmidt, Brenna Beluk, Eileen Ornousky, Laura Knox and coach Whitney Borisenok. Front row: Caitlyn Ornousky, Katie Schmidt, Sam Saccamano, Amanda Millilo, Niki Talericio and Elaine James. Missing from the photo are Jen Johnston and Morgan Delbene.

FASTPITCH SOFTBALL

Jen Frusciante and Millilo followed with hits to close out the scoring.

Talericio pitched a three-hit shutout, striking out eight and walking only three to earn the win.

In the second game, the Blaze posted a 6-3 win over the Bordentown Bandits. Elaine James pitched a complete game three-hitter, striking out six. The Blaze were led offensively by Eileen Ornousky, who delivered a bases-loaded double to give the Blaze a 4-3 lead.

Katie Schmidt went 4-for-4 with a triple, three runs and two RBIs while Millilo went 2-for-4 and Saccamano 2-for-3 with a triple. Brenna Beluk and Jen Frusciante were the offensive stars, while shortsop Laura Knox was the defensive star with several nice plays.

The Blaze wrapped up the tournament championship with a 14-2 win over the Marlton Warriors.

The Blaze received another well pitched game as Sam Saccamano pitched a four-hitte, striking out six and walking four in this four-inning mercy rule victory.

Leading the way at the plate were Talericio (2-for-3 with two RBIs), Milillo (2-for-4 with a double and two RBIs), Jess Schmidt (2-for-3), Saccamano (2-for-3 with a triple), Eileen Ornousky (2-for-2 with two RBIs), Meg Billmeyer (1-for-2 with two RBIs), Caitlin Ornousky (two hits) and Katie Schmidt (2-for-2 with two runs).

The Blaze finished the season as co-champs in the Xtreme chaos tournament, runner-up in the ASA states and champs of the NJ Heatwave tournament.

New life for Gholston

Linebacker hoping to put dismal season behind him

By DENNIS WASZAK Jr.

Associated Press
CORTLAND, N.Y. — Vernon Gholston stormed through on a blitz and shoved center Nick Mangold back on his heels during a recent New York Jets training camp practice.

It was the type of fierce and powerful move the Jets and their fans have expected from the muscle-bound linebacker since he was taken with the sixth overall draft pick last year.

"I think Nick was surprised by it, and he gave him a little extra shot at the end of the play," coach Rex Ryan said Sunday between practices. "If he can move Nick Mangold like that, he could move anybody."

The problem for Gholston is that those moments have been rare. He was expected to immediately boost the Jets' pass rush last season, but finished with no sacks and saw limited time on the field.

"Did I do all I wanted to do? Probably not," said Gholston, who found himself mainly a special teams player. "But the biggest thing for me, I never look back on the past. I always look forward."

And he certainly has something to look forward to. With starting outside linebacker Calvin Pace suspended by the NFL for four games for violating the league's performance-enhancing drugs policy, Ryan has already installed Gholston as the fill-in starter.

"We'll see," Ryan said. "It's all going to come out in the end. He's going to be our starter for the first four games, for sure, and let's evaluate him after those games."

Gholston had a decent minicamp and has had a couple of moments in training camp, but much more is expected. After setting an Ohio State record with 14 sacks in

JETS CAMP



2007, none as an NFL rookie had some fans and members of the media already labeling him a bust.

"A bust? Well, I think people relate it to where you're picked in the draft, but I don't know if you can say that for players who haven't been out there much," he said. "Look at quarterbacks. Some of them take a few years to develop."

Another knock on the hulking linebacker is that he perhaps lacks the competitive fire to be a dominant force in the NFL.

"What is fire?" Gholston said, bristling slightly. "Is fire jumping up and down when you make a tackle? I'm not going to do that. You're supposed to make tackles. That's my job. Now, if we win the Super Bowl, then you'll see me jumping all over the place. To me, it's about working hard and being prepared."

Ryan also insists the desire is there.

"One thing I'll say about Vernon is I've been challenging him everyday with little things here and there," Ryan said. "One of the things I was talking about was just running through things because he is a big, strong guy. He is a rock. Just get that feeling for running through somebody."

Early in training camp, Ryan and defensive coordinator Mike Pettine have been mixing Gholston in with Pace and Bryan Thomas, along with Marques Murrell, at outside linebacker.

"It's not really about proving anything," Gholston said. "I know I can play. The coaches know I can play. It's just all about getting in the defense, knowing what I'm in, knowing what I play, what I've got going on and stepping up and doing it."



New York Jets linebacker Vernon Gholston runs into position against the offense during practice Sunday at training camp in Cortland, N.Y. Gholston is hoping to put a dismal season behind him.

Murrell is also hoping to play a bigger role in the defense, and has shown some signs of being a solid pass rusher.

"I'm looking to be able to step on the field and let the coaches feel comfortable when I step on the field and be able to make plays," he said. "I don't want to be just out there, to just hold a spot. I don't want to be just a dummy out there."

Ryan said Murrell, at 6-foot-2 and 250 pounds, might lack the physical size to be an every-down linebacker, but likes him as someone who could get to the quarterback in Pace's absence.

Disgruntled Marshall leaves practice

Associated Press
ENGLEWOOD, Colo. — Disgruntled Denver Broncos wide receiver Brandon Marshall missed the last hour of practice Sunday after pulling up with an apparent hamstring injury while running a deep sideline route.

Marshall hobbled to the sideline, tossed his helmet and dropped to

the grass. He didn't return to action, staying on the sideline a few minutes before limping to the trainer's room.

Marshall has had another drama-filled off-season, this time complaining about his contract and requesting a trade four months after appearing in his first Pro Bowl.

Norwalk LL wins tourney

Contributed report
The Norwalk Little League 12-year-old All-Stars won the 18-team Stamford American Invitational this past Thursday, beating North Stamford 7-4 in the championship game.

Norwak was a perfect 7-0 in the tournament, 4-0 in pool play, to earn a No. 1 seed and a first round bye in the playoffs.

The all-stars defeated Stamford American 14-0 in the first playoff game on Tuesday night to advance to the semifinals against Ridgefield.

Due to rain on Wednesday, both the semifinals and finals were scheduled for Thursday night at Vine Road in Stamford.

Semifinals

Norwalk 7, Ridgefield 5

After spotting Ridgefield an early 2-0 lead in the top of the first, Norwalk started off with a single by Jared Smith, Trey Newcomb followed with a double and Kevin Love drove them both in with a long three-run home run over the center field fence.

Norwalk never looked back and added a pair of runs in both the fourth and fifth innings. Paul Salata scattered 11 hits over 5 2/3 innings with four strikeouts and no walks for the win. Brendan Hanzlik got the last out on one pitch for the save. Trey Newcomb went 3-for-3 and scored two runs and Salata doubled off the wall and scored on a Hanzlik single.

Final

Norwalk 7, North Stamford 4

Norwalk again spotted their opponent an early lead, falling behind 2-0 after the first inning and 3-1 after two, but the bats came alive in the third as Norwalk put up three runs to take the lead for good.

Drew Pace led off the inning with a double and scored on a one-out hit by Jared Smith, who was thrown out trying to stretch it to a double. Trey Newcomb doubled and scored on the big blow of the inning; a Kevin Love two-run homer.

Norwalk added one run in the fourth on a single by Sean Welch, who scored on an RBI double by Nate Cutting.

In the fifth, Norwalk struck again as Smith and Newcomb hit back-to-back singles, Love

LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL

forced Smith at third, Ryans Evans moved Newcomb to third on a sacrifice fly and Paul Salata drove him in with a line shot up the middle. Brendan Hanzlik then drove in Love with a double to end the scoring for Norwalk.

Hanzlik started on the mound and went three innings, allowing three runs on three hits. He struck out four and walked five. Love relieved in the fourth and allowed only one run on one hit and struck out six, walked one and hit a batter.

For the tournament, Kevin Love was named Most Outstanding Player and was named to the All Tournament team, along with Trey Newcomb. The pitching was solid throughout the tournament with Ryan Evans, Brendan Hanzlik, Love and Salata leading the way. Clutch hitting was provided by Hanzlik, Smith, Newcomb, Pace, Love and Evans.

Norwalk outscored their opponents 70-10 in the seven games, including 42-1 in pool play.

The Norwalk players in the tournament were Tom Arduino, Nate Cutting, Ryan Evans, Brendan Hanzlik, Kevin Love, Trey Newcomb, Drew Pace, Edward Petrillo, Paul Salata, Alex Scallion, Jared Smith and Sean Welch.

Kinlock

Tournament

Ryan Evans threw a complete game four-hit shutout to lead the Norwalk Little League to a 3-0 victory over Cranbury Saturday at Tim Devine Field.

Evans finished with eight strikeouts and no walks.

Sean Welch provided all the offense Norwalk would need on a solo home run to center in the second inning. Jared Smith and Alex Scallion both scored and contributed two hits while Paul Salata added an RBI single.

Thomas Hemderson took the loss for Cranbury, scattering eight hits, striking out four, issuing one walk and two earned runs. Will Uralowich, Chris Murawski, James Henderson and Pisano had hits for Cranbury.

Giants worried about Pierce

By TOM CANAVAN

Associated Press
ALBANY, N.Y. — Releasing troubled Super Bowl hero Plaxico Burress about four months ago didn't rid the New York Giants of the

controversy associated with his shooting. The gun possession case against Burress

continued to haunt the Giants on Sunday as coaches and players reported to training camp at the University at Albany and expressed concern about what the future might hold for middle linebacker Antonio Pierce.

Pierce was with Burress when the receiver shot himself in the thigh in a New York City nightclub in November, and he may face charges for his actions after the incident, which authorities say included taking Burress to a hospital

under an assumed name and taking the gun to Burress' home in Totowa, N.J.

Burress did not have a permit for the gun; he has pleaded not guilty to weapon possession.

Pierce, who reported to training camp but didn't make himself available to the media on Sunday, testified before a Manhattan grand jury twice last week.

His attorney Michael Bachner said the grand jury asked the player lot of questions and his statements were "clear, coherent and consistent." Bachner said he was confident the grand jury will see Pierce did nothing criminal.

The Giants placed linebacker Michael Boley and defensive tackle Fred Robbins on the active physically unable to perform list and put defensive tackle Rocky Bernard on the non-football injury list.

The moves with Boley (hip) and Robbins (knee) on Sunday were expected because the two had undergone surgery.