

Little League wraps up Kinlock title

From B1

second inning of relief to lock up the win for Little League.

"We played three close games and we were separated by two runs (18-16) in the series," West Norwalk head coach Andy Andriuk said. "It's a very even match but somebody had to win two games."

Following Sunday's 9-7 slugfest, in which the teams' combined for nine home runs, fans saw a much different game Tuesday.

"That's why they play the games," Newcomb said. "All the fans came thinking they were going to see the ball hit out of the park."

Before running into trouble in the fifth, Terzian was overpowering. He left the game allowing five runs (four earned) on three hits and six walks while striking out eight in four innings.

Early on Hanzlik



Hour photo/MATTHEW VINCI
Norwalk Little League starter Brendan Hanzlik delivers a pitch during Tuesday night's Kinlock Tournament game against the Cal Ripken all-stars. Little League won, 5-2, clinching the 2009 Kinlock crown.

nearly matched Terzian pitch for pitch, but after stranding six baserunners in the first two innings, gave up an unearned run in the third.

David Balunek doubled with one out and attempted to move to third on a groundout. Welch, the Little League first baseman, tried to throw out Balunek as he went to third but the throw was wild. Balunek then broke for home as Nate Cutting fielded the

ball in left. Cutting seemed to have time to throw Balunek out at the plate but his throw sailed high as the go-ahead run scored.

West Norwalk added to its lead in the fourth when Ryan Connors (2-for-2), Leo Andriuk (2-for-3) and Terzian hit consecutive one-out singles. Matt Downey followed with a sacrifice fly to left as Cal Ripken led 2-0.

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Salata surrendered two hits and registered a strikeout in two scoreless innings to earn the win.

Little League, which condensed down to one team, showed off its talent together instead of spread to multiple teams.

"It's the first time in a while that a Little League team has won this tournament," Newcomb said. "We worked real hard with Williamsport to get down to one team and we fared much better in the District One Tournament and won a tournament in Stamford."

For Cal Ripken, Andriuk was pleased with how his team came together while relying on some 11-year-old reinforcements.

"We never quit. That was the hallmark of our season," Andriuk said.

Two games remain in the annual Kinlock Tournament with Cal Ripken (2-3) playing against Cranbury (1-3) on Thursday and Little League facing Cranbury Saturday.

Woods has a new perspective in '09

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ing a three-week stretch of competition at a major. What makes him a heavy favorite, besides his obvious skill, is winning the last two times he has played.

He played a final practice round Tuesday morning, and found the full measure of Hazeltine at 7,674 yards and a par 72. Walking along the fairways, he couldn't help notice pitch marks in the grass, evidence of the soft conditions from weekend rain.

The 12th hole is now 518 yards, matching the longest par 4 in PGA Championship history. Woods belted a driver down the fairway, and still needed every bit of a 3-iron to get to the green.

And he's one of the longer hitters.

Rees Jones was involved in the changes, and Rich Beem offered one idea how he went about his work.

"I think Mr. Jones went down to every tee box and looked down every fairway, and turned around 180 degrees and just started walking," said Beem, who won the '02 PGA at Hazeltine when it was 7,355 yards. "This thing is just long. I mean, it's just excessively long, and it's nowhere near the golf course that it was. But it's the state of the modern game, I guess. In order to make it harder, just make it longer."

PGA Championship director Kerry Haigh has drawn praise in recent years for moving the tees to give players variety, so it might not play its full length each day.

Beem remembers only playing some of his best golf seven years ago, winning his only major. He closed with a 68, including a 35-foot birdie putt for a lead that was big enough to withstand Woods' run of four straight birdies.

Woods was trying that year to become the first player to win the "American Slam" — all three majors in the United States. The setting is far different this year, even if the argument can be made he is playing even better.

He has finished out of the top 10 only twice this year — a tie for 17th in the Accenture Match Play Championship when he was eliminated in the second round, his first competition in eight months, and a missed cut in the British Open.

It was only the second time in three years Woods didn't play the weekend — both times at a major — although Turnberry now seems longer ago than a month. His average score the last two weeks is a 67, leading to a three-shot win at the Buick Open and a four-shot victory at the Bridgestone Invitational.

"I feel as if I made some pretty good strides since the British Open," Woods said. "I think it was evident the way I was hitting the golf ball last week. I really hit it good last week, and hopefully, I can improve on that."

The entire year, in some respects, has been in a work in progress.

Woods hit the ball poorly at the Masters, where he tied for sixth, which he attributed to his left knee not being strong enough for practice sessions after his round. That changed a month later, and he hit the ball beautifully at Bethpage Black. His tie for sixth at the U.S. Open was more a product of being unable to make a putt.

The British Open

remains a mystery. Woods had every part of his game fall apart over a six-hole stretch that he played in 7 over — a lost ball off a bad drive, a bad iron over a green, poor chips and missed putts — and he never recovered.

Not much has changed, however, in the eyes of his competition.

Someone asked British Open champion Stewart Cink to assess Woods' chances going into the final major of the year.

"I'd say he's got a pretty good chance — probably better than anybody else in the field. How's that for an answer?" Cink said with a smile. "I mean, he's driving it pretty well. He's got a short game that history has never known. He's got the clutch putting that history has never known. And he's got the ultimate tank of confidence to draw form. So case closed."

This is the sixth time Woods has come to the PGA Championship without a major championship to his name. He won 10 years ago at Medinah in a duel with Sergio Garcia, and he won two years ago at Southern Hills, where he tied a record with his 63 in the second round.

The other three years, Woods ended the year feeling empty. He says that won't be the case this time.

Woods insists he wasn't fined

CHASKA, Minn. (AP) — Tiger Woods has said he was not fined by the PGA Tour for his critical remarks about a rules official putting the last group on the clock at Firestone.

A PGA Tour official said Monday that the world's No. 1 player would be fined for his comment. He spoke on condition of anonymity because the tour does not publicize fines.

A section of the PGA Tour handbook says "it is an obligation of membership to refrain from comments to the news media that unreasonably attack or disparage tournaments, sponsors, fellow members, players or PGA Tour."

"I've heard from the tour and there's no fine," Woods said. "That was an erroneous report."

Woods was annoyed after his four-shot victory Sunday because he and Padraig Harrington were put on the clock after walking off the tee at the par-5 16th.

He said that caused Harrington to rush three difficult shots, leading to triple bogey that effectively ended the tournament.

European Tour chief referee John Paramor told Woods and Harrington they were being timed.

Woods said he told Harrington after it was over, "I'm sorry that John got in the way of a great battle."

Asked Tuesday if he regretted making the issue personal by calling out Paramor, Woods said, "No. Because he's the one who did it."

Woods said he can appreciate the job of a rules official, and "that's why I thought they would have used better judgment on that."

"As I said, we were the ones that were probably going to win the golf tournament in the last group. We separated ourselves," Woods said. "And after what Paddy went through, we were still right there behind the group in front of us. ..."

Ripken 9s bow in state title matchup

Contributed report

West Norwalk's 9-year-old Cal Ripken all-star team recently completed a deep run in the state tournament, advancing to the title game before losing 12-2 to Newtown, which went through the tournament undefeated.

West Norwalk finished the double-elimination tournament with a 3-2 record.

"The boys played very well throughout the state tournament," West Norwalk manager John Thorne said. "But we lost to a very good Newtown team."

During the tournament, which was held in Bethel, West Norwalk recorded

wins against Coventry (6-4) and Danbury (3-0) before being sent to the loser's bracket by the powerful Newtown squad. However, a win by West Norwalk over Bethwood in the loser's bracket final forced a rematch with Newtown.

Members of the West Norwalk team, which was sponsored by Conroy Irrigation, included Corey Acevedo, Patrick Auz, Michael Claps, Matt Clarke, Hugh Clyne, Chris Druin, Jordan O'Brien, Brendan Quinlan-Huertas, Matt Saint-Louis, Kyle Spezzano, Johnny Thorne and Chris van der Els. Manager John Thorne was assisted by coaches Mike Claps and Wayne Spezzano.

Keller working to become more complete player

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be on the field," Ryan said. "There's no sense to take him off the field and put a better blocker on the field. We need him out there and he needs to be an every-down tight end, and he is."

Keller has been working closely with left tackle D'Brickshaw Ferguson this summer on blocking techniques, hand placement and footwork.

"Brick has helped me a lot, and we have to be on the same page because half the time I'm blocking, I'm on his side and the other half on (right tackle) Damien Woody's side," Keller said. "We have to have the same mindset, know what each other's thinking and be able to communicate."

While Keller's block-

ing skills still have a ways to go, his teammates have been impressed so far with his progress.

"He's been working hard at it and the thing I like about it is he's not going to let people put him in that box of just being a pass-catching tight end," wide receiver Jerricho Cotchery said. "The better he gets at that — and he has gotten a lot better — the better we'll be as an offense."

Keller said he gradually learned the pass concepts as last season went on, but struggled to pick up the techniques and what was needed from him in the run game.

"So in the offseason, I just focused on the run game and what all my roles are and what I'm doing and what the guy next to me is doing," he

said. "Learning all that stuff has just made me able to be a much better blocker."

Keller has already seen the effects of that, practicing daily against a tough Jets defense.

"When I run a route, they're not just sitting there and trying to get their hands on me every single time because they don't know for sure that I'm running a route," he said. "I can be in there and it gives me a better chance to get up under them and always have them guessing."

A converted wide receiver, Keller said he's finally comfortable as a tight end.

"Sometimes they split me out and move me around the field," Keller said, "but when I'm in there blocking with the tackles, I feel completely

like a tight end now."

NOTES: The Jets move from SUNY Cortland to Hempstead, N.Y., for a single practice Wednesday at their former training site at Hofstra. They return to Cortland on Sunday. ... Ryan said Woody (head), CB Darrelle Revis (left hamstring), NT Kris Jenkins (left calf) and C Nick Mangold (right knee) are "very doubtful" to play in the preseason opener against St. Louis on Friday. ... Ryan said both Kellen Clemens and Mark Sanchez will take snaps with the first-team offense, but neither will get extended action. Erik Ainge will take the majority of the snaps vs. the Rams. ... WRs David Clowney and Wallace Wright were excused from practice for personal reasons.

Brady hoping for a lot of action in preseason opener

Associated Press

Tom Brady is hoping for a starring role. Bill Belichick might allow a cameo.

The New England quarterback is eager to get back in the game — any game — after spending nearly a year recovering from a left knee injury suffered just 7:33 into the 2008 season opener against Kansas City.

That's a little more than seven minutes of

NFL NOTEBOOK

NFL playing time since the Patriots fell to the New York Giants in the Super Bowl in 2008.

No wonder Brady is excited about the Patriots' preseason game Thursday at Philadelphia.

"Yeah, I'm ready, I think everybody's ready," said Brady, who played himself in an episode of HBO's

"Entourage" that aired this week. "We've had a good camp, guys have been working real hard trying to do what coach Belichick's asked. It will be nice to go out and play the Eagles. They really gave it to us last year."

Brady said after Tuesday's practice that he hadn't spoken with Belichick about his playing time, but said the entire team had been told to be ready to play.

"I'm expecting to play," he said. "There's no reason why I wouldn't."

Bulger expects action

Starting quarterbacks usually ease into the preseason, often playing no more than a series or two in the exhibition opener.

But when the St. Louis Rams visit the Jets on Friday, Marc Bulger

expects plenty of playing time — perhaps as much as three quarters.

The Rams are in their first preseason under new coach Steve Spagnuolo. They're also learning the West Coast offense under new coordinator Pat Shurmur.

"It could be three quarters or two," Bulger said of his playing time. "It's a new staff and we're all still trying to get a feel for each other. Hopefully, we'll get a couple of good drives and see how it goes."

How much playing time will be enough?

"It's a fine line. You want to get your work in, and obviously you want to be successful," Bulger said. "You don't want to go in and have two drives and not get anything done. At the same time, you want to be fresh going into the season because it is a long year."

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