

Ridgefield National powers to victory over Norwalk

RIDGEFIELD

By **MATTHEW DORAN**
Hour Staff Writer

The Norwalk Little League all-star team was walking on air heading into the second game of the District 1 tournament Friday afternoon.

And who could blame them?

Norwalk was coming off an impressive 10-0 mercy-rule victory over Weston in the first game on Wednesday night, leading everyone involved to think the team was headed for a nice long run through the tournament.

That might still be the case. But Ridgefield National sure

did stop Norwalk in its tracks, using an explosive offensive attack to jump out to a 6-0 lead after two innings before holding on for a 10-4 victory at Aldrich Field.

Ridgefield National, which improved to 2-0 in pool play after its 9-8 win over Stamford Federal in the first game, collected 14 hits off two Norwalk pitchers. That included three home runs with Joe Coyle (2-for-4) and Zac Bova ripping back-to-back shots during a four-run second inning.

Ben Peters also went deep for Ridgefield in the fifth inning.

"They hit a couple of balls that were moon shots," said

DISTRICT 1 LITTLE LEAGUE

Ridgefield Nat'l	10
Norwalk	4

Norwalk manager Mike Newcomb, whose team will be back on the field at 2 p.m. Sunday against Darien American at Bisceglie Field in Weston. "No matter how good your defense is, you can't defend against that."

Ridgefield scored twice in the first on three hits, sent 10 men to the plate during its four-run second and added

three more in the third for a 9-0 lead.

Ridgefield actually uses wood bats during its regular season house league, and National manager J.R. Burke says that gives his kids a huge advantage once they reach tournament time.

"All these kids are swinging metal bats for the first time these past few games, and it shows," Burke said. "The league started (using wood bats) three years ago. We started with our fall instructional league and we decided at the highest level we were just going to use wood bats. I really think it helps because now they're going against

harder throwers and the bats are a little quicker."

Ridgefield National has hit five home runs in two district tournament games, cranking two against Federal. So you can say National has its power game going pretty good.

"Not by design," Burke said. "But it's working out that way."

Norwalk also flexed its muscle in the bottom of the third inning, battling back with four runs to pull to within 9-4. The big blow came off the bat of Ryan Evans, who finished up a nice 10-pitch at-bat with a towering three-run

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Federer seeks 15th Slam title

WIMBLEDON

By **HOWARD FENDRICH**
Associated Press

Rising, rising, rising, high above the most famous patch of grass in tennis, Roger Federer channeled Pete Sampras on match point in the Wimbledon semifinals Friday, tucking both feet back beneath his body and uncorking an overhead smash.

And now, after years of chasing Sampras, Federer is poised to surpass him.

A victory over No. 6-seeded Andy Roddick of the United States in Sunday's final at the All England Club would give Federer his 15th Grand Slam singles championship, breaking a tie with Sampras for the most in history. It also would give Federer a sixth Wimbledon title and a return to No. 1 in the rankings.

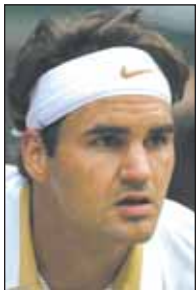
As it is, No. 2 Federer's overwhelming 7-6 (3), 7-5, 6-3 victory over No. 24 Tommy Haas of Germany in Friday's opening match on Centre Court put the Swiss star in a seventh consecutive Wimbledon final and 20th career Grand Slam final — establishing two other marks.

"I'm very proud of all the records I've achieved, because I never thought I would be that successful as a kid. You know, I would have been happy winning a couple tournaments and maybe collecting Wimbledon," the 27-year-old Federer said. "It's quite staggering."

Yes, Roger, it certainly is.

When he finished off Haas with that Sampraslike leaping putaway, Federer simply waited at the net to shake hands. Then he gave a little wave of his racket in the direction of

see FEDERER B4



Federer



Norwalk starting pitcher Alex Petridis delivers during Thursday night's 15-year-old Babe Ruth District 2 championship game against Trumbull. A team composed largely of the players that won the 14-year-old World Series last summer, the Norwalk 15s took the first step on this year's championship trail with a 14-4 victory over Trumbull. With the win, Norwalk advanced to the state tournament.

Hour photo/DANIELLE ROBINSON

Norwalk 15s off to perfect start

NORWALK

By **MIKE LIVINGSTON**
Hour Correspondent

One step of the journey has been completed for the Norwalk 15-year-old Babe Ruth all-star team.

Coming off a World Series championship on the 14-year-old level last season, Norwalk took its first steps in getting back to the big stage, winning the District 2 Championship with a 14-4 victory over Trumbull Thursday night at Brien McMahon High School.

Norwalk won the game in six innings, its fourth straight "mercy rule" victory. The game marked the first time in the tournament Norwalk had given up a run.

Norwalk will now move on to the state tournament, which begins on July 17 in Orange.

"It's the first step," head

BABE RUTH BASEBALL

Norwalk	14
Trumbull	4

coach Anthony Daniello said. "Were happy to win the district and now we have to just take it one game at a time into the state tournament."

Up only 5-4 in the bottom of the fourth inning, Danny Diaz broke the game open with a grand slam to stretch Norwalk's lead to 9-4.

"That was a huge hit for us," said Bryan Daniello, the team's shortstop. "We were a little shaky before that, but that hit really got us going and we were able to put some hits together and get another win."

Norwalk starter Alex Petridis battled through

three-plus innings to earn his second win of the District tournament. Petridis wasn't as solid as he was in his first outing, during which he didn't allow a hit.

However, Enzo Latella was outstanding in relief to allow the Norwalk bats to get going.

"Enzo did a great job," coach Daniello said. "He was big for us in relief and he did exactly what we needed him to do."

Norwalk got out to an early 1-0 lead in the bottom of the first. Petridis reached on an error by the shortstop before coming around on an RBI single by James Cooksey. The single was the first of three for Cooksey, who went 3-for-5 with three RBIs.

After an easy inning from Petridis, Norwalk got four more runs in the second inning to take a 5-0 lead. With runners on first and sec-

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Burnett leads Yanks past Jays

NEW YORK

By **RONALD BLUM**
Associated Press

After he was knocked out in the third inning at Fenway Park in early June, A.J. Burnett vowed to improve.

Has he ever.

Burnett scattered six hits over seven innings to win for the third time in four starts, and the Yankees opened the long holiday weekend with a 4-2 victory over the Toronto Blue Jays on Friday.

"When you're clicking, everything just flows," Burnett said. "When you're clicking on pitches, you don't even think about anything. You know, it's just all confidence out there."

Robinson Cano homered leading off the second and Alex Rodriguez starting the eighth. The Yankees, who wore jarring red caps as part of Major League Baseball's Fourth of July weekend celebration, rebounded from Thursday night's 8-4 loss to Seattle for their eighth win in nine games following a 1-5 slide.

"It was good to have a day game and get back at it really quickly," said Rodriguez, whose 567th homer — his fifth in eight games — left him two shy of Rafael Palmeiro for 10th place.

It was the start of an unusual stretch of four straight day games between New York and Toronto, a series that includes Saturday's observance of the 70th anniversary of Lou Gehrig's famous farewell speech.

Burnett had lost 5-1 to his former team and Roy Halladay at Toronto on May 12.

"Completely different," he said. "Not even close. I didn't even pay attention to who got in the box today. The first time was kind of weird."

see YANKEES B4

Armstrong gets first test on opening day

MONACO

By **JAMEY KEATEN**
Associated Press

The Tour de France is ready for another edition with Lance Armstrong, and today's opening stage may show whether he's ready to challenge for another title.

Armstrong's 37-year-old legs will be tested immediately when the three-week race begins with a 9.6-mile time trial. The stage will be run along the hilly streets and hairpin turns of Monaco, a Mediterranean principality better known for Formula One than for huffing two-wheelers.

The ride will likely offer an early shakeout of potential contenders who want to at-

TOUR DE FRANCE

least hold their own in the race against the clock.

Specialists in the discipline include Fabian Cancellara of Switzerland, who won gold in the time trial at the Beijing Olympics, and Bradley Wiggins of Britain.

They could capture the leader's yellow jersey, though they aren't expected to fare as well when the race reaches the Pyrenees in Stage 7. Title contenders to watch Saturday include Cadel Evans of Australia, Denis Menchov of Russia and 2007 champion Alberto Contador of Spain, for whom the course is almost tai-

lor-made because of its hills.

The main race favorites — except Armstrong and American teammate Levi Leipheimer — will start last as the 180 riders set off one by one.

Defending champion Carlos Sastre of Spain, wearing the yellow jersey and No. 1 bib, will go last. Armstrong asked to be the first Astana rider to go. He'll ride 18th, nearly three hours before Sastre — time enough for weather conditions to change.

Armstrong used to be an expert time trialer, and part of the suspense will be seeing whether he's slowed with the years.

see ARMSTRONG B4



Seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong, center, gestures as he rides with his Astana teammates during a training session this week in Monaco. The 96th edition of the Tour de France begins today with Armstrong back in the field after a three-year absence.